



A guide to

Managing Your Money

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Contents

1. Are you having problems managing your money?	2
2. Paying your rent.....	3
3. Practical steps to deal with your debts.....	5
4. Useful contacts.....	6
5. Spending sheet.....	9
6. Income sheet	11
7. Organising your debts	12
8. Contact us	13

1. Are you having problems managing your money?

Anyone can fall behind with payments at some time. You may be in difficulty because you are not getting the benefits you are entitled to, or you may have other money worries. Whatever the reasons are please do not ignore them, because they will not just go away. Most importantly, try not to panic – we can help you!

Remember, your rent along with your council tax is a priority debt. settle will take action against you if fail to pay your rent or do not work with us to solve your money problems.

Firstly, contact us. Together you can review the situation and identify the best way to tackle the issues.

If you have other debts as well as rent or council tax it is likely you will need more specialist advice. If you live in the North Hertfordshire area, settle can provide FREE access to services from a trained Money Advisor who can help you. Alternatively, you may wish to seek other independent advice – turn to the Useful Contacts pages for details of other services who can help.

2. Paying your rent

Every rent week begins on a Monday. You can pay your rent weekly, fortnightly or monthly, but it should be paid in advance. For example, if you are paying your rent monthly for the month of September this should be paid at the beginning of that month.

You can choose various methods to pay your rent:

- By Direct Debit. This is a simple and secure way to manage your rent payments. It's all handled automatically and you will pay the same amount each month so won't have to worry about missing a payment. There are certain criteria you will need to meet to use this payment method, for more information speak to your Neighbourhood Officer.
- Online via our website www.settlegroup.org.uk or by visiting www.allpayments.net
- By telephone to Allpay 0844 557 8321, quoting your debit or credit card details. You will also need your housing payment swipe card to hand.
- At any Post Office or shop displaying the 'PayPoint' signs using your housing payment swipe card.
- By cheque made payable to settle with your payment reference number and address on the back.

If you are not able to pay your rent:

- contact your Neighbourhood Officer immediately
- get some professional help
- pay as much as you can afford
- contact the local council's housing advice team if you are facing eviction. They will discuss your options with you.

Do not:

- ignore the problem as you could lose your home
- assume you have an automatic right to be re-housed.

What happens if my rent is not paid?

Initially we will write to you about your debt. Please contact your Neighbourhood Officer immediately to discuss your situation. The earlier you seek advice, the easier it is for us to help. This will mean your debt should not get out of hand and it is less likely we will have to take further action.

If you ignore the problem, you may be served with a Notice of Seeking Possession. This is the start of the legal process and advises you of our intention to apply to the County Court for a Possession Order for non-payment of your rent. Please contact your Neighbourhood Officer to discuss this immediately. If you fail to respond, we will apply to the County Court for a Possession Order.

A Possession Order may be granted and could be executed within 14 or 28 days, and you could lose your home as a result. If an arrangement to pay is made in court, the Possession Order may be granted and then suspended. You will also be responsible for the court costs which will be in excess of £100.

If you fail to make the payments in line with the Suspended Possession Order, settle can apply to the court for an eviction warrant. You will incur further court costs and you could be evicted from your home.

3. Practical steps to deal with your debts

- Do not be embarrassed by your situation, you are not alone and you can get help. Acting quickly can significantly reduce the impact of debt on your life.
- Firstly, take a moment to consider all your regular income and outgoings. Use the pull-out sheet at the back of this leaflet to make a list of all your bills and prioritise them.
- Can you afford all the bills you have to pay each week/month?
- Talk to all the people you owe money to, let them know you are getting help with your situation.
- If you want to save and/or access affordable credit do not do this through a doorstep or internet lender. This can be very expensive and lead to more financial problems in the future.
- You can join your local credit union (contact details are listed in this leaflet), they will be happy to offer you savings plans and consider requests for loans with low interest rates.

Some useful checks

- Check that you are receiving all the benefits you are entitled to. If you are unsure use an online benefits calculator such as www.gov.uk/benefits-adviser or contact the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) or the benefits agency for advice (see Useful Contacts).
- Make sure your tax code is correct and you are not paying too much.
- Make sure you are at least receiving the national minimum wage.
- Check if any of your loans are protected by insurance.
- Ask your landlord if you can have a water meter fitted then seek advice from the water company in your area about possible savings.

4. Useful contacts

Citizens Advice 03444 111 444
www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Call or visit the main website where you can find details of local services that offer free impartial and confidential guidance and money advice.

Credit Unions

These are savings and loans co-operatives run by, and for, their members.

Black Squirrel Credit Union (North Herts)
01462 613060/61

Opposite are some local contacts, or you can search online for your nearest credit union.

Bedford Credit Union
01234 346352

St Albans Credit Union
01727 859135

Luton Credit Union
01582 666877

Civil Legal Advice

Get free and confidential legal advice if you are eligible for Legal Aid.

0345 3454 345
www.gov.uk/civil-legal-advice

Trust Funds

There are several trust funds that can offer help with utility bill

British Gas Energy Trust
www.britishgasenergytrust.org.uk

payments for people experiencing serious debt problems.

EDF Energy Trust
www.edfenergytrust.org.uk

Call 01733 421060 to request an application form or visit their websites.

Affinity Water Trust
www.affinitywatertrust.org.uk

Served in the Armed Forces?

These organisations offer financial, practical and emotional help for anyone who has served in the armed forces.

Royal British Legion
0800 802 8080
www.britishlegion.org.uk

There are also benevolent funds for each armed service, and many others who can help if you worked in public services.

SSAFA Forces Help
0800 731 4880
www.ssafa.org.uk

Shelter

For advice on housing debt and homelessness.

0808 800 4444
www.shelter.org.uk

StepChange Debt Charity

For free, confidential advice and support to anyone who is worried about debt.

08000 662 511
www.stepchange.org

National Debtline (Money Advice Trust)

For free confidential and independent advice on how to deal with debt problems.

0808 808 4000
www.nationaldebtline.co.uk

5. Spending sheet

Use the Spending Sheet to work out how much your household spends.
Use either weekly or monthly figures, and stick to them throughout.

A. Housing Costs	Rent		
	Council Tax		
	Mortgage		
	Secured Loan		
	Insurance (house/contents)		
	Other (repairs etc)		
	Total A		

B. Fuel	Electricity		
	Gas		
	Oil		
	Coal		
	Water		
	Other		
	Total B		

C. Housekeeping	Food		
	Milk		
	Cleaning materials		
	Mobile/Telephone		
	TV/internet		
	Furniture		
	Newspapers/magazines		
	Other		
	Total C		

D. Travel	Work		
	School		
	Shopping		
	Visiting		
	Hospital		
	Other		
	Total D		

E. Car	Road tax		
	Insurance		
	MOT		
	Repairs/service		
	Oil and petrol		
	Car loan		
	Other		
	Total E		

F. Miscellaneous	Hire purchase		
	Clothing		
	Child care		
	Tools for work		
	Prescriptions		
	Pocket money		
	Entertainment		
	Other		
	Total F		

Totals	A		B		C	
	D		E		F	

Total spending (add totals A, B, C, D, E, F)	
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6. Income Sheet

Use the income sheet to work out your household's regular income. Use either weekly or monthly figures, and stick to them throughout.

	You	Your partner
Wages/salary		
Child Benefit		
Jobseekers Allowance/Income Support		
Working Tax Credit		
Child Tax Credit		
Employment Support Allowance (ESA)		
Attendance Allowance		
Housing Benefit		
Statutory Sick Pay		
Sick Pay from work		
Retirement pensions		
Pension Credit		
Occupational pensions		
Personal Independence Payment (PIP)		
Family/lodger's contributions		
Any other income or benefits		
Total income		
Combined Total Income		

7. Organising your debts

Put each of your debts into the appropriate column below. You must deal with your priority debts first. If you have a number of debts we recommend you seek specialist money advice.

Priority debts (rent, mortgage, Council Tax, secured loans, electricity, gas, fines, child maintenance)		Non-priority debts (store cards, credit cards, overdraft, unsecured loans, catalogues)	
Name and address of creditor and account number			
1		1	
2		2	
3		3	
4		4	
5		5	
6		6	
7		7	

8. Contact us

Website www.settlegroup.org.uk

Email customer.service@settle.org.uk

Telephone 0330 343 0016

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