



---

# MAKING YOUR MONEY WORK

A practical guide



**Housing  
Executive**



**The Housing Executive is committed to helping our tenants keep a roof over their heads, avoid being in debt, and save for a rainy day.**

## **Our practical guide gives...**

- Advice on how to prioritise finances
- Advice to help improve finances
- Tools to help keep track and plan ahead
- Information about our Benefit and Budget Calculator
- Signposts to support including to our own in-house Financial Inclusion Service

**Over half of UK households keep a regular budget. Most say it gives them peace of mind about how much they are spending, and makes them feel better about life in general.**

*Money & Pensions Service*



# BUDGET YOUR MONEY

## Make a plan.

### WRITE IT DOWN

It will take a little effort and motivation but draw up a budget so you get a clear sense of what's coming in and going out.

Include:

- 1 **Your income** (salary / wages, benefits, child maintenance etc...)
- 2 **Your regular spending** (rent / rates, bills for heat / electricity, food, clothes; etc...)
- 3 **Your occasional spending** (house insurance, Christmas, school uniforms, birthdays; etc...)

In the centre of this booklet we have a budget planner to get you started.

You can find a Benefit and Budget Calculator on the Housing Executive website, or ask your Patch Manager for a referral to a Financial Inclusion Manager.

By making sure your spending does not exceed your income you'll avoid debt.

### A budget means you are:

- **Less likely to go into rent/rates arrears;**
- **Less likely to end up in debt;**
- **Less likely to get caught out by unexpected costs;**

### You'll be:

- **More likely to have a good credit rating;**
- **More likely to be accepted for a mortgage or loan;**
- **More likely to spot areas where you can make savings; and**
- **More likely to save for a holiday, a car, or treat.**

— “ —————  
***Keep the roof over your head by making sure your rent / rates are paid.***  
————— ” —



“

**“Our Financial Inclusion Strategy 2023—2028 comes at a critical time for everyone who engages with the Housing Executive.**

**We are adjusting to a ‘new normal’, following a worldwide pandemic, and facing an acute cost of living crisis.**

**Our new strategy empowers tenants and housing customers to become more financially resilient.”**

*Housing Executive*

”

**You can read the strategy on our website.**

# DON'T IGNORE DEBT

## It won't just go away.

The longer you leave debt the worse it will get. Look at all your debts and split them into:

### DEBT EMERGENCIES

- facing court action
- statutory demands
- bankruptcy
- prison
- eviction for rent arrears
- disconnection

### PRIORITY DEBTS

- rent & rates
- gas / electricity / oil bills
- child maintenance
- TV Licence
- essential hire purchase agreements
- court fines

### NON-PRIORITY DEBTS

- credit card / store card
- payday loans
- catalogue / home credit
- in-store credit debts
- bank / building society overdrafts
- personal loans
- money borrowed from friends or family

“

**It's important to pay off debts in the right order as the consequences of not paying off some debts before others can be more serious.**

”



“

***One tenant came to us as she was struggling to pay her rent as her working hours had reduced. We completed an entitlement check and discovered she was eligible for £309.33 more per month.***

”

# WHAT TO DO IF YOU'RE IN DEBT

## **Keep a roof over you**

Call us to see how we can help with your payment of rent / rates on 03448 920 900 or you can ask us for a referral to your local Financial Inclusion Manager.

## **Get advice**

There are specialist debt advisers willing to help you.

For free, impartial advice contact Advice NI on 0800 915 4604 or email [info@adviceni.net](mailto:info@adviceni.net) or go on-line to [www.adviceni.net](http://www.adviceni.net)

## **Contact creditors**

Call them to explain your circumstances, jot down the details of your conversation and try to get a contact name for future reference.

If you do not want to do it on your own contact an independent advice centre where an advisor will be able to help.

## **Facing court?**

Make sure you complete court papers and give all the facts. If you're summoned to court...GO!

It does not make you a criminal, most hearings are private. Take along a copy of your Financial Statement.

## **ALSO**

**Don't borrow to pay off debts**

**Avoid doorstep lenders**



**We work with Advice NI which helps people resolve debt issues, call them if you need help 0800 915 4604.**

*Housing Executive*



# BEHIND ON THE RENT?

## Don't ignore the problem.

There are many reasons why you might fall behind but you can take positive steps to avoid eviction...

- STEP 1** Identify and acknowledge the problem and work out a plan
- STEP 2** Contact the Housing Executive on 0344 892 0900
- STEP 3** Get free or impartial help and advice, or speak to your Financial Inclusion Manager.
- STEP 4** Reduce your monthly outgoings, where possible
- STEP 5** Boost your income – get a benefit check by contacting your Patch Manager for a free Benefit and Budget Calculation

### **Financial Inclusion Service**

The Housing Executive have an in-house Financial Inclusion service. They are confidential and here to help. Ask your Patch Manager for a referral.

### **Get debt advice**

The Housing Executive can refer you, or you can directly call Advice NI on 0800 915 4604 for specialist advice on money and debt or arrange a face-to-face appointment with an adviser.

### **Make the Call**

To make sure you're getting all the benefits you are entitled to call 0800 232 1271.

**We will work with you to pay the rent owed in regular instalments, along with your current rent / rates charge.**

**Talk to your Patch Manager on 03448 920 900.**

Housing Executive



**PULL OUT AND KEEP**

**MY**

# **FAMILY BUDGET**

**Before you get started, gather together as much information (bank statements, bills...) as you can.**

**The more up to date your details are,  
the more accurate your results will be.**

**MAKE SURE YOUR FIGURES ARE CONSISTENT  
– USE EITHER WEEKLY OR MONTHLY.**



**Housing  
Executive**

**STEP 1: ADD IT UP****Income Details**

	Per Week	Per Month
Wages / Salary	£	£
Social Security Benefits/ Universal Credit	£	£
Housing Benefit	£	£
Child Benefit	£	£
Tax Credits	£	£
Pension	£	£
Contribution from Household members	£	£
Maintenance	£	£
Other	£	£
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>

**Expenditure Details**

	Per Week	Per Month
<b>Priority Debts</b>		
Rent / Rates / Mortgage	£	£
Heating: Gas / Oil / Solid Fuel	£	£
Arrears on Fines	£	£
Arrears on Maintenance	£	£
Essential Hire Purchase	£	£
Income Tax / Tax / VAT	£	£
National Insurance	£	£
TV Licence	£	£
<b>Non-Priority Debts</b>		
Bank overdraft	£	£
Bank loan	£	£
Unsecured Bank Loans	£	£
Credit Union loan	£	£
Credit Card	£	£
Credit Sales Agreement	£	£
Store Cards	£	£
Interest Free Credit	£	£
Mail Order Catalogue	£	£

## Expenditure Details continued

### Other Expenditure

Home Contents Insurance	£	£
Car costs (tax / insurance / fuel)	£	£
Public Transport costs	£	£
Electricity	£	£
Cable, Satellite and Internet	£	£
Telephone (including mobiles)	£	£
Food and Housekeeping	£	£
Clothing	£	£
Childcare	£	£
School expenses (include meals, uniforms and transport)	£	£
Meals out (eg work lunch)	£	£
Corner / Coffee shop purchases	£	£
Cigarettes / Alcohol	£	£
Pet costs (e.g. Food, vet fees, insurance, kenneling.)	£	£
Leisure interests	£	£
Other (Specify)	£	£
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>

## STEP 2: WORK IT OUT

	Per Week	Per Month
Total Income	£	£
<i>take away</i> Total Expenditure	£	£
What's left, is it plus or minus?      + / -	£	£

## STEP 3: SET YOUR SAVINGS GOALS

1
2
3
4
5

## STEP 4: MAKE YOUR MONEY WORK CHECKLIST

### Tick off what you've completed



Completed budget / money planner

Prioritised any debts

Called for money advice (E.g. Advice NI on 0800 915 4604)

Called Housing Executive 03448 920 900 to set up direct debit to pay my rent and rates

Called Housing Executive 03448 920 900 to discuss any rent and rates arrears

Spoken to a Financial Inclusion Manager on 03448 920 900

Bought / Checked home contents insurance

Checked my electricity tariff, looked for the best deal and switched

Checked my gas tariff, looked for the best deal and switched

Checked my telephone / internet tariff, looked for the best deal, spoke to my supplier about Social Tariffs and switched

Called NI Energy Advice on 0800 111 4455 for free and independent local energy advice

Opened a bank / credit union account

Kept a spending journal for a month

Started to plug spending leaks

Set my savings goal(s)

Opened a savings account



**Housing  
Executive**

# PAY US YOUR WAY

## The Housing Executive has made it simpler for tenants to pay their rent.

We offer eight convenient options for you to ensure your rent is paid.

- Direct Debit - It is easy, convenient, safe and our preferred method to pay
- Online at [nihe.gov.uk](http://nihe.gov.uk)
- PayPoint outlet
- Call our new automated payment line on 03303 903 048
- Call Assistance, call your local office on 03448 920 900
- Download our new payment App on Google Play Store or Apple App Store by searching 'Housing Executive' or 'NIHE'
- Standing order

Each option offers tenants a safe, convenient method of paying and details are on our website.

**What can happen if you don't pay your rent?  
Ignoring the problem is not an option as you may risk losing your home.**

If you are a Housing Executive tenant you are breaking one of the conditions of your tenancy and you may lose your tenancy.

We will work with you to come to a fair voluntary agreement to clear your arrears.

If rent is not being paid we can apply for direct payment from certain social security benefits.

We also reserve the right to take you to court and recover possession of your home. You will be responsible for legal costs, which can be substantial.

# MANAGE YOUR MONEY

## It can really pay off.

### Save for a rainy day

Some people find it hard to get motivated about saving, but it's often much easier if you **'set a savings goal'**.

#### Step 1

Have emergency savings – money to fall back on if there's an emergency. Aim to have three months' worth of outgoings (check your budget to see what that might be) tucked away in an easily accessible account. A good way is to direct debit money into a savings account each month.

#### Step 2

Once your emergency fund is sorted set a savings goal. It could be:

- A holiday
- Buying a car without a loan
- Paying into a pension

Get into the habit of putting some money into a savings account regularly. Even a little can help a lot.

### OPEN A CREDIT UNION, BUILDING SOCIETY OR BANK ACCOUNT

There are many advantages with having one.

You can arrange for vital regular bills to be paid by direct debit or standing order shortly after you have been paid or received benefits.

Use telephone or internet banking to keep track of your balance and payments 24/7.

Speak to your local Credit Union, bank or building society to see what they can offer.

Some banks offer a 'round-up' option which makes saving up even easier!



**Spend Just a few hours  
scrutinising, organising  
and switching to save; do a  
money make-over.**



## Check Statements / Receipts

Get into the routine of checking receipts before leaving a shop and reading bank / credit card statements just to ensure everything is correct and any payments due have been withdrawn.

## Money 'leaks'

Do you wonder where your money goes all the time? Keep a spending journal for a few weeks to see just where those leaks are and begin to plug them... no plumber needed!

In general they fall into four categories:

- things that are not essentials (takeaways, snacks, coffees, drinks on a night out);
- things we don't use (subscription services / gym memberships);
- things we put off doing (bills review and contracts that auto renew eg home / car insurance or phone contract); and
- things we just can't be bothered with (pre-made lunches, late payments on bills).

However you approach each of the above there are chances to save money.

## Talking Credit

If you use credit cards do try and pay off each month in full to avoid interest and fees. Avoid drawing cash from an ATM with a credit card.

If there's a 'buy now pay later' scheme available only take it if you get 0% interest and make sure you save a little each month so you can 'pay later'. If you're making a large purchase and you can pay over a number of months make sure it is at 0% interest too! Before you start though make sure you can keep up those payments.

## Giving credit where it's due

The idea is simple. If you pay rent - as your landlord, the Housing Executive provides your rent payment record to Experian on a regular basis. This information is used to build your credit profile without you taking on new credit agreements. It also helps to create an online proof of identity, proving you are who you say you are and that you live where you say you live. Proving this makes you a more reliable potential customer to companies.



**80% of our tenants who have rent to pay have increased their credit score simply by paying their rent on time.**





“

**A Tenant asked to speak with us when he reached pension age, as he still needed to pay £48 a week in rent after Housing Benefit. We looked into what benefits he might be entitled to and managed to reduce this shortfall to £6 per week.**

Financial Inclusion  
Manager

”



# BE ENERGY SAVVY!

## Saving energy saves money.

### Be a switcher!

Are you on the right electricity or gas tariff, check out information on utility companies appearing on the Housing Executive's website /Facebook / Twitter and magazine for tenants 'Streets Ahead'.

### Our top tips for saving energy are:

- Do not leave equipment on standby
- Turn the heating thermostat down 1 °C
- Move furniture away from radiators
- Try to wash full loads only at 30 °C
- If a light bulb blows, replace it with an energy saving light bulb
- Only fill your kettle with the water you need
- Turn off the lights in room you aren't using
- Reduce your shower to 5 minutes
- consider investing in an airfryer if you don't need to cook much as once- some brands make them for around £30!

### NI ENERGY ADVICE

A call that won't cost the earth but may save £££s.

**For free, impartial Energy Saving advice call 0800 111 4455**



**Check if you are on the right energy tariff.**





“  
**A single parent came for a benefit check as they were moving after a split. They had previously only been getting carer’s allowance. We sat down and worked out that they could actually be entitled to over £1600 per month in benefits.** Financial Inclusion Manager  
”

# AND DON'T FORGET

## Home Contents Insurance

You are responsible for your contents. We as landlord are responsible for the bricks and mortar. For more information on purchasing home contents insurance contact Supporting Communities on 028 2564 5676, your local office on 03448 920 900, local insurance brokers or search comparison websites online. Get several quotes before deciding.

## Welfare Changes

The UK Government has made a number of changes to the welfare system. Many benefits for people of working age are being replaced by a new benefits and payment system. More information on these important changes can be seen at: [www.nidirect.gov.uk/welfare-changes](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/welfare-changes) or you can speak to your local Financial Inclusion Manager.

## SCAMS

If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is! More information is online at: [www.actionfraud.police.uk](http://www.actionfraud.police.uk). Or call Action Fraud on 0300 123 2040

## Making Work Pay

Employment is the most effective way of improving living standards and becoming less dependent on welfare benefits. The transition from benefits to employment can be challenging but there are people and schemes across a network of Jobs & Benefits offices to help make this move easier.

## Jobs & Benefits Offices

They are there to help match those who are unemployed or want to change to a more suitable job opportunity. They can also help those who are not job ready develop their skills and competence to become employable.

**Contact your local Jobs & Benefits office on 0300 200 7822 or online at [www.jobapplyni.com](http://www.jobapplyni.com) or email [jobapplyni@communities-ni.gov.uk](mailto:jobapplyni@communities-ni.gov.uk)**



**BOGUS CALLERS - Housing Executive staff always carry ID when calling at the door.**



## USEFUL CONTACTS

The Housing Executive is here to help so contact us by either calling into your local office or as follows:

Accounts / General .....	<b>03448 920 900</b>	Housing Benefit.....	<b>03448 920 902</b>
Text phone .....	<b>18001 03448 920 900</b>	Text phone .....	<b>18001 03448 920 902</b>
Repairs .....	<b>03448 920 901 (24/7)</b>	Financial Inclusion Managers-	
Text phone ....	<b>18001 03448 920 901 (24/7)</b>	call and ask for a referral....	<b>03448 920 900</b>

     [nihe.gov.uk](http://nihe.gov.uk)

There are **other organisations** which will help you make your money work harder for you...

### ADVICE NI

**0800 915 4604 (Freephone)**

[advice@adviceni.net](mailto:advice@adviceni.net)

[www.adviceni.net](http://www.adviceni.net)

### WELFARE CHANGES ONLINE

[www.nidirect.gov.uk/welfare-changes](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/welfare-changes)

### WELFARE CHANGES HELPLINE

**0800 915 4604**

### ENERGY ADVICE

**NI Energy Advice 0800 111 4455**

[nienergyadvice@nihe.gov.uk](mailto:nienergyadvice@nihe.gov.uk)

### SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES

[www.supportingcommunities.org](http://www.supportingcommunities.org)

**028 2564 5676**

[info@supportingcommunities.org](mailto:info@supportingcommunities.org)

### MAKE THE CALL (BENEFITS CHECKER)

**0800 232 1271**

**Text phone 0800 232 1715**

[makethecall@dfcni.gov.uk](mailto:makethecall@dfcni.gov.uk)

### LAW CENTRE NI

**028 9024 4401**

[admin@lawcentreni.org](mailto:admin@lawcentreni.org)

[www.lawcentreni.org](http://www.lawcentreni.org)

### HOUSING RIGHTS SERVICE

**028 9024 5640**

[www.housingrights.org.uk](http://www.housingrights.org.uk)

### CONSUMER COUNCIL

**028 9025 1600**

[info@consumercouncil.org.uk](mailto:info@consumercouncil.org.uk)

### MONEY & PENSIONS SERVICE

**Money Helper Helpline - 0800 138 7777**

**Typetalk - 18001 08000 915 4622**

[enquiries@moneyadviceservice.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@moneyadviceservice.org.uk)

### NIDIRECT (GOVERNMENT WEBSITE)

[www.nidirect.gov.uk](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk)

### JOBS AND BENEFITS

**0300 200 7822**

For your local office, see: [www.nidirect.gov.uk/contacts/jobs-and-benefits-offices](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/contacts/jobs-and-benefits-offices)

#### How much will calls cost?

*Calls to 01 or 02 numbers are charged at the national rate and count towards any inclusive minutes or discount scheme you have in place. Calls to 03 numbers cost no more than a national rate call to a 01 or 02 numbers. They must also count towards any inclusive minutes in a phone contract in the same way as 01 and 02 calls. These rules apply to calls from any type of line including mobile, landline or payphone. Calls to 080 numbers are free from landlines and from mobiles when called from the UK.*