

## Covid-19 - Tips to Keep Control of your Finances

As the world continues to react and change to cope with COVID-19, there are many challenges posed in our everyday lives. At Care first we recognise that increased anxiety is likely in many areas, including financial concerns.

Here are some useful tips and advice to help manage your finances whilst also alleviating those stresses and anxieties.

### **Stay Calm**

It can be hard to make good decisions in a state of stress & panic.

Research shows that our brains are wired to be more reactionary under stress and this can limit the options we feel are available to us.

### **Rework your Budget According to your New Reality**

Make a new budget that will take into account where you are now.

Do not rely on outdated budgets. If you do not have a budget make one!

Include all family members in the discussion about how to reduce costs. Talk through the priorities, and what might be possible with any outstanding funds.

This will give teenagers and children an idea of the financial stresses you may be dealing with and enhance their understanding on bans on unessential spending such as pay per view movies, fast food, etc.

Once you have reworked your budget, if possible, try to put money aside – a rainy day fund for emergencies.

### **Prioritising Debt**

There are often so many things you need to pay out each month that it can become difficult to know what you need to pay first.

How do you tell a priority bill from a non-priority debt? What makes a mortgage payment more important than a credit card payment?

At [stepchange.org](https://www.stepchange.org) you have access to a table highlighting what your priority bills are, and what can happen if you don't pay them. The consequences can vary depending on whether you live in England, Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland.

<https://www.stepchange.org/debt-info/dealing-with-debt-problems/what-debts-to-pay-first.aspx>

## **Support from the Government, Banks & Lenders**

Government, banks and lenders have taken unprecedented steps to help support individuals and families struggling with financial hardship during the Covid-19 outbreak.

It's important for everyone to understand the support on offer and whether you are eligible.

Some of the support on offer includes:

- Deferred or lower interest mortgage payments.

For more guidance on this please visit [fca.org.uk](https://www.fca.org.uk).

- Negotiating rent payment with your landlords.

- Some banks are offering waivers on overdraft charges.

For more information it's important that you contact your bank.

## **Beware of Miracle Solutions & Scams**

The UK Government, regulators and financial organisations are urging people to be extra vigilant as fraudsters seek to exploit the coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis.

Official advice from [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) says the scams are taking many forms, including illicit pension transfers that syphon money into criminal accounts, bogus high-return investment opportunities, and the sale of worthless health supplements and of safety equipment that is never delivered.

Government advice on avoiding the lure of scammers includes:

- never giving out personal details (bank details, address, existing insurance/pensions/investment details)
- rejecting offers coming out of the blue
- establishing a company's credentials via FCA's Financial Services Register
- not opening emails or clicking on links or from senders you don't know
- being wary of promised returns that sound too good to be true
- taking time to check all information
- seeking separate expert advice before acting.

## **Protect Your Mental & Physical Wellbeing**

Maintaining a healthy sleep pattern healthy diet & exercise will help maintain positive mental wellbeing and curb those urges to buy non-essential items online.

There is no shame in asking for help, leaning on those you trust and also helping others as best you can. If you are experiencing problems with finances or dealing with debt, you can contact Care first. Care first are an independent, leading provider of professional employee support services. Care first employ professionally qualified Counsellors and Information Specialists, who are experienced in helping people to deal with all kinds of practical and emotional issues such as Wellbeing, family matters, relationships, debt management, workplace issues, and much more.