

MANAGING MONEY TIPS



It's easy to get into debt when you're dealing with all the extra costs a cancer diagnosis brings. This step-by-step guide will help you beat the stress and kick debt where it hurts. Your future self will thank you for it.

1. Face it head-on

If your debt feels like too much to handle, it's time to accept it's a problem. Chat about it with someone you trust or a debt counsellor. It'll be a weight off your shoulders. You'll find lots of helpful links to support when you scan the QR code at the end of this factsheet.

2. Get a handle on what you owe

Suss out exactly how much and who you owe. Pull together reminder letters, loan agreements and statements to help you keep track. You could start a list or a spreadsheet.

Tackle urgent court papers or letters first – the sooner the better. If you don't, your creditors (the people and organisations you owe money to) won't know you're struggling and will assume you don't plan to pay. This could mean a court order giving bailiffs permission to take your possessions.

3. Sort your spending

Manage your cash and reduce your outgoings by creating a budget. You can find budget planners online to help you do this, including from Money Helper. Taking control will help you see where your money is going, and can be handy when contacting your creditors.

4. Check your benefits

Look into applying for Personal Independence Payment (PIP) to help cover the extra costs cancer brings. You could be entitled to other benefits too. Our free Welfare Advice Service can do a full financial check for you, help you apply and answer questions.

5. Contact your creditors

Intimidating calls, threatening letters and unwanted bills. We get why speaking to these guys may be the last thing you want to do. But it'll be worth it. Creditors want to work with you to help you repay your debt – it's in their interest and yours. Be honest and explain your situation.

Ask creditors to explain what type of agreement you have, the balance owing, terms of repayment and interest or penalties, your debts and any insurance policy attached to the agreement.

Remember, creditors can't bombard you with calls or threaten you with legal action. They would be breaking the law. They also can't pressure you to pay off large amounts in one go or tell someone in your family about your debts. If this happens, get in touch with Citizens Advice for support.

Do:

- Ask them if they can freeze any interest on your debts
- Ask them if they will agree to you paying a smaller amount over a set period of time (although this will affect your future credit rating)
- Get any agreements in writing and keep a copy of letters or emails you've received or sent
- Try offering your creditors a full and final settlement, where you pay a lump sum instead of the full balance you owe. In return, the creditor agrees to write off the rest of the debt.

Don't:

- Give away your account and reference details to anyone other than the creditors
- Agree to pay an amount that isn't realistic and that you can't afford – use your budget as a guide
- Hand your property keys back to the lender
- Send any payment before it's agreed (especially in terms of a full and final settlement)
- Borrow more money, known as debt consolidation loans – they may help you in the short-term, but could end up getting you into more serious debt.

6. Tackle what's urgent

Some debts are more urgent than others and should be paid off first. Not paying could have serious consequences, like losing your home or having your gas or electricity cut off.

Priority debts include:

- Mortgage
- Rent
- Council Tax
- Gas and electricity (not water, as this can't be cut off for non-payment)
- Court fines
- Child maintenance
- TV Licence
- Income Tax, National Insurance and VAT.

Non-priority debts include:

- Credit cards, overdrafts, loans, hire purchase, buy now pay later and catalogues
- Benefit overpayments
- Local authority parking fines
- Water and sewage charges
- Student loans
- Money owed to friends and family.

Now decide how each debt is going to affect your life. For example, if you need your car to get to treatment, sort out any repayments as a priority. Add these to your list of urgent debts.

Head to moneyhelper.org.uk for more information about priority debts.

7. Deal with court orders

If you do have to go to court, don't miss your hearing unless you have a very good reason. Bring your financial statements and copies of relevant letters and emails with you.

If you can't make a hearing because you have planned treatment or aren't well enough, don't just ignore it. Let the court know ASAP so they can excuse you and organise another date.

8. Get support

- Talk to your local Citizens Advice – find them at citizensadvice.org.uk
- National Debtline – nationaldebtline.org or 0808 808 4000
- StepChange Debt Charity – stepchange.org or 0800 138 1111.

Contact us for support, Monday to Friday:

Phone: 0300 303 5220 (9am–5pm)

Email: getsupport@younglivesvs cancer.org.uk (9am–5pm)

Live chat at younglivesvs cancer.org.uk (10am–4pm)



Scan the QR code for links to more support with managing your money

Young Lives vs Cancer helps young people and their families find the strength to face everything cancer throws at them. We've been there before. We'll face it all, together.