

Prioritise your debts and take control of your money

If you are no longer able to pay all of your creditors (the people you borrow from/owe money to), you need to seek debt advice and contact your creditors. Debt Advice agencies may advise you to stop creditors taking money from your account automatically. This means cancelling direct debits and standing orders for payments that are not a priority.



Debts are prioritised according to what can happen if you don't pay them:

- **If you don't pay your rent**, you can lose your home.
- **Failing to pay council tax and criminal fines** can result in bailiffs getting involved and in some cases you can be sent to prison.
- **Your gas and electricity** can be disconnected.
- Normal **credit debts such as loans, credit cards, store cards and catalogues**, tend to be treated as a lower priority. If these creditors take you to court, the court will usually order you to pay an affordable amount based on your income and expenditure.

Other options to deal with your debts

Negotiating payments with your creditors is often the simplest solution. It can mean that you end up spreading payments over a very long period of time.

Some other solutions might mean you can stop paying much sooner - you should always get independent advice about these options to make sure you are aware of all the potential problems.

If you have concerns about paying your rent, or require further assistance in budgeting or debts contact Housing 01793 445503.



This information is available on the internet at www.swindon.gov.uk
It can be produced in a range of languages and formats (such as large print, audio, Braille or other accessible formats) by contacting the Customer Services Department.

Tel: 01793 445500 Fax: 01793 463331
E-mail: customerservices@swindon.gov.uk

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www.swindon.gov.uk/housing

Budgeting – making your money go further

To manage your money you need to plan a budget to work out what you can afford to pay.

Work out your income and check for ways to increase it.

Work out your expenditure and look for ways to save money.

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Swindon Borough Council relies on you fully paying all the Rent and Council Tax that is due. If following the benefit changes you are having difficulties in paying both Rent and Council Tax, then our advice is to seek some budget planning advice.



Housing

 **SWINDON**
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Income

List your regular income from wages, benefits etc. Make sure it covers the same period so you are clear how much is available (i.e. all weekly or all monthly). Only include income you can rely on – only include overtime if it is regular.

What to consider:

- **Could you be claiming other benefits or tax credits?** If you are not working you may be able to claim benefits if you:
 - Have a disability
 - Have caring responsibilities
 - Are an older person
 - Have children

If you work but have a low income, you can check whether you are paid the legal minimum wage or whether you might be able to claim tax credits to top up your wages.

Visit www.gov.uk or www.dwp.gov.uk for advice.

- **Could anyone else be helping out?** Grown up children or other adults in the household, should be contributing to the running costs of the house.
- **If you have a spare room you could consider taking in a lodger?** For further advice on how this will affect your benefits speak to Housing Benefit tel: **0345 302 2316**.
- **Are you paying too much tax?** Check your tax allowance and get advice if you think it might be wrong. Visit www.hmrc.gov.uk for advice.

Outgoings

List all regular payments and work them out either weekly or monthly.

Look at your list and see where you can make savings, there might be some obvious areas where you can make savings.

There are plenty of other ways to try and cut back your expenditure such as:

- **Entertainment** - try planning your entertainment and set a spending limit so that you can make the best use of your money.
- **Food** - avoid spending money on things you don't need. Try sticking to a shopping list.
- **Transport** – try managing without a car or at least cutting down how often you use it.
- **Insurance** - check around for cheaper quotes when you renew any policies. Have a good look at the policies and remove any options you do not need. Housing has negotiated preferential rates with Royal Sun Alliance and premiums start from 95p a week for £9000 of cover. Contact 01793 464657 for further details.
- **Utilities** – shop around for the cheapest deals from different gas and electricity suppliers. There are several websites that can help you compare prices. A water meter might be cheaper for small households or those who do not use much water.



Simple energy saving measures can save money on your bills:

Turning your heating down by just one degree and using your boiler's timer control efficiently can make big savings.

- Keep heat in by draft proofing doors and windows.
- Closing the curtains a bit earlier when it goes dark can help keep the heat in.
- Your electricity bill can be cut by using energy saving bulbs, switching off lights in empty rooms, as well as televisions and appliances which are normally left on standby.
- Boiling less water and defrosting your freezer can also save money on your electricity bill.