

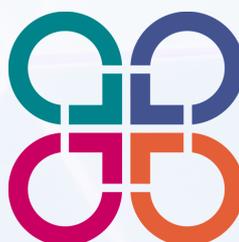
Central England
Law Centre

HOW TO HELP

when someone you meet is
worried about money

C O N T E N T S

Welcome.....	2
How you can help.....	3
Specialist legal help.....	4
Universal credit.....	5
Council tax.....	9
Health & wellbeing.....	13
Food & fuel.....	19
Fallen behind on rent.....	22
No Recourse to Public Funds.....	27
Further resources for support.....	31



W E L C O M E

We have designed this guide and the Are You Worried About Money leaflet with the big goal of preventing evictions.

We know lots of people who are struggling to pay their rent find it difficult to engage with support that starts with discussions about the money they owe or the debt they are in.

In our experience talking to someone about what is going on in their life, that has left them struggling with money, helps them to tell us the important parts of their story quickly and more easily.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

You can support a person to think through what's been happening and give them reassurance that everyone encounters difficulties. This reduces their fear of being judged. Often it leads to a more immediate view on the root cause of their rent problems.

We have suggested :

- a way to approach exploring each of the possible situations
- some helpful info to help you understand how this might cause a person to struggle with their rent payments
- some things you might ask, check and do immediately

SPECIALIST LEGAL SUPPORT

This guide is designed to help you start to support a person with money worries in your very first conversation with them.

The next part of helping can be complex and our Rights in the Community helpline is on hand for you to access to reassure and encourage the person who needs help.

In this way we can work together to get better help, more quickly, to those who need it and to reduce evictions.

Rights in the Community helpline:

024 76 253165 / 024 76 252683

07957 711080 / 07496 881145

help@centralenglandlc.org.uk

If the person is experiencing complex debt you should link the person in with CAB and/or CIAS for specialist debt advice

UNIVERSAL CREDIT

There are lots of things that go wrong with old and new claims. Maybe a person's money has stopped or they are not receiving as much as before. You can help them to take back control of their account and to work through problems.

It has been a complicated year for everyone including the DWP and they admit that some people may have got the wrong advice.

- There are lots of new claimants who haven't claimed all the elements they are entitled to.
- Employment has been complicated with working hours reduced or fluctuating for example zero-hours contracts in retail or hospitality sectors.
- More people have been sick, shielding or having to self isolate resulting in complicated claims

This results in more claims with over-payments, deductions and sanctions where the overall amount of money people receive is reduced.

UNIVERSAL CREDIT

- 📍 Universal Credit is made up of a basic allowance plus different elements for things like housing costs, bringing up children, caring or sickness and disability.
- 📍 The amount a person gets in Universal Credit can go down or up depending on what income they get from: working, pension and savings and capital above £6,000.
- 📍 Universal Credit is normally paid as a single monthly payment, but it's made up of several different elements.
- 📍 On top of the standard allowance, a person might get additional allowances including child element, childcare costs element , limited capability for work-related activity element (LCWRA), carer element , housing costs element. The housing element needs to be applied for separately and is sometimes missing causing a person to be unable to pay their rent.
- 📍 A range of other benefits and help sit alongside Universal Credit that need to be applied for separately. Anyone experiencing ill health or disability or caring for a child or adult will be entitled to extra money on top of Universal Credit.

RECENTLY UNEMPLOYED

- 📍 If they've lost their job, they might be able to get New Style Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA), Universal Credit or Pension Credit.
- 📍 New Style Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) can be claimed if:
 - they usually work less than 16 hours a week
 - they're under State Pension Age
 - they have made enough National Insurance contributions over the last two to three years.
 - their savings and partner's income will not affect how much they get
- 📍 They might be able to get New Style JSA at the same time as Universal Credit.
- 📍 Universal Credit
 - If you're already getting tax credits, they will stop when you or your partner applies for Universal Credit.
- 📍 Depending on their circumstances, Universal Credit can include additional amounts for things like rent or the costs of raising children.

UNIVERSAL CREDIT ACTION



Reassure the person you are working with that claims are complex and there is often more help than they think.



Ask them what money they have coming in and how much they have going out



Don't be afraid to ask them what their income is made up of and if they are claiming any benefit.



Did you know people need to log in regularly to their claim to accept commitments, provide fit notes and agree appointments?



Can you log on together now to check what is happening on their account?



If you see deductions or sanctions on their claim you need to seek specialist help as often it is possible to overturn sanctions and manage payments better around deductions.



COUNCIL TAX

People will recently have received new bills but we know many people may still owe money on last year's bill which can make things difficult.

Many people struggling to pay their rent are often behind with their council tax. When the new bill arrives they might still be paying off last year's bill and in some cases bills from years before that.

COUNCIL TAX

- 📍 People living on low income and/or benefits like Universal Credit or Job Seeker's Allowance, can get their council tax bill significantly reduced by applying for Council Tax Support.
- 📍 Council Tax Support simply reduces the council tax bill. They will not receive money into their bank account. It is therefore different from housing benefits.
- 📍 So, for example, if their current council tax is £100 a month but they are entitled to 50% council tax support, their bill will be reduced to £50 a month.
- 📍 Council Tax Support is not included in Universal Credit and as such it needs to be applied for separately from Universal Credit.

COUNCIL TAX

Council Tax Exemptions

- 📍 There are a wide range of discounts and exemptions available, which can reduce a persons council tax bill significantly.
- 📍 Whether someone is eligible for these discounts depends on their situation. For example, income, the size of property, whether they receive benefits like Universal Credit or Job Seeker's Allowance, whether they live alone or with others.
- 📍 Some of the discounts/exemptions available are: Council Tax Support; Single Occupier's Allowance; Disabled Person's Relief.
- 📍 The discounts/exemptions will only reduce the current council tax bill and not any debt. But if they should have received a discount or exemption before they apply for it, for example if they have received benefits for several years, they may be able to have the Council Tax Support backdated.

COUNCIL TAX ACTION



Start by asking if the person has received their new council tax bill and ask if they have set up their payments.



Check if they are up to date with their payments from previous years or still have monies outstanding.



Ask if they have applied for Council Tax discounts or exemptions – a successful application can significantly reduce their bill and make debts more manageable.



Further info to support people with council tax is available at:
centrallenglandlc.org.uk/council-tax-debt



Let them know you know that being in council tax debt can feel overwhelming but ignoring it can have serious consequences, including imprisonment.



Talk about how important it is to contact the Council to discuss ways to pay. If they have unopened bills, offer to look at letters with them.



If someone you are helping has council tax debt get them specialist advice (see p31 for CIAS and CAB contact details)

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Maybe a person has been unwell or is looking after someone who is struggling and needs lots of support. This can make it really hard to manage. It also means they maybe entitled to extra money or support.

HEALTH & WELLBEING

The main benefits a person can claim to help with the extra costs of their personal care needs or disability are:

-  **Personal Independence Payment or Attendance Allowance (if you've reached State Pension age):** These are designed to help with the extra costs faced because of care needs or disability. They are not means tested so don't depend on a person's income or savings
-  **Council Tax Reduction:** Some of these relate to a person's disability or care arrangements and are not means tested.
-  If someone can't work, or works reduced hours because of sickness or disability, financial support is available. They might be able to claim **Statutory Sick Pay (SSP)**, paid by their employer. If this has run out, or can't be claimed, they might be able to claim **Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)**, **Personal Independence Payment (PIP)** and other benefits alongside **Universal Credit**.

HEALTH & WELLBEING

Carer's Allowance



A person might be able to claim Carer's Allowance :

- they spend at least 35 hours a week caring for someone or
- are aged 16 or over or
- are not in full-time education or studying for 21 hours a week or more or
- earn £128 per week (2021-22) or less (after tax, National Insurance and expenses). That's £6,656 annually.



The person they are caring for might be a child or an adult and must also be getting a benefit because of their illness or disability. For example:

- ✓ Attendance Allowance
- ✓ Disability Living Allowance (the middle or higher rate of the care component)
- ✓ Personal Independence Payment (either rate of the daily living component)
- ✓ Armed Forces Independence Payment.

HEALTH & WELLBEING

-  When someone is struggling with their health and wellbeing it can have an immediate impact on their household income. This can result in them being unable to work or needing reduced hours. The level of ill health or disability an individual is experiencing has a direct impact on the amount of money they may be entitled to. Their age also has an impact.
-  People living with or caring for those with health conditions and disabilities often have to spend more on special food, utilities, washing, equipment and transport. This means they need extra money to live. It is difficult to navigate these additional benefits and entitlements if you are already struggling and some people give up before they get the right help.

HEALTH & WELLBEING

Bereavement support

-  **Bereavement Support Payment** - if a husband, wife or civil partner died on or after 6 April 2017 and the surviving partner is under State Pension age, they may be able to get bereavement support payment.
-  **Funeral Payment** – Someone may be eligible for a funeral payment if they or the person who died were receiving certain benefits and they find themselves responsible for funeral costs.
-  **Widowed Parent's Allowance** - if a husband, wife or civil partner died before 6 April 2017, they are pregnant or have dependent children under the age of 19 (or 20 if getting Child Benefit for them) and they were married or in a civil partnership when their partner died they may be entitled to Widowed Parent's Allowance.

HEALTH & WELLBEING ACTION



Reassure the person that you know things are difficult and you are there to try and understand if they have all the help, support and money they need.



Have they been unwell short term or is this an ongoing situation?



Try and find out if their ability or availability for work has been affected this can help in identifying support they may be entitled to.



Acknowledge how easy it is to get overwhelmed by all that they have going on and how complex navigating the benefits system is- let them know you are there to help.



Try to find out as much as you can about how the person you are supporting has been managing recently.



It is really important to help someone think about their physical and mental health and wellbeing as both affect how someone is able to manage key tasks and money.

FOOD & FUEL

When someone is struggling to afford food and fuel it's essential to respond quickly to this need. There can be many reasons someone's outgoings are more than their incomings and it's important to try and find out why they need this help. If they are worried about talking to you in detail offer to link them into free confidential help from the Rights in the Community helpline.

It can be difficult to uncover why someone needs extra help. This can be because there are hidden reasons that some people feel uncomfortable talking about things, like substance misuse, gambling or debts. Sometimes a person may have tried and failed to access help.

It is difficult to navigate services and help especially if you have vulnerabilities and people sometimes give up before they get the right help.

FOOD & FUEL

- 📍 Coventry Foodbank offer free support to local people in crisis.
- 📍 A person must have a valid foodbank voucher in order to use this service.
- 📍 If they have not been directly affected by COVID-19 but still need a Foodbank voucher they can contact Coventry Foodbank directly or call 024 7699 3770.
- 📍 Social Supermarkets, also known as Grub Hubs, offer heavily discounted food parcels, typically about £20 worth of food for a cost of a £4 membership.
- 📍 Social Supermarkets or Grub Hubs do not require a person to have a foodbank voucher to access them but may have some criteria to ensure they are helping those who need it most.

FOOD & FUEL ACTION



Don't be afraid to ask if the person you are helping is managing to buy food and pay their household bills.



Reassure them that in Coventry right now lots of people are struggling and there is a large network of community-based social supermarkets/food hubs that offer a whole week of shopping for £4.



Additional help for cost of living eg low cost toiletries and cleaning products is available through Bare Necessities and can be accessed via food hubs



Check if they might be entitled to free school meals or Healthy Start vouchers.



Think about if there might be other ways this person's income could be maximised and activate this help alongside food.



Link them straight away to this support as doing something practical helps to support someone in feeling hopeful and building trust. See Further Resources on page

FALLEN BEHIND ON RENT

If you are helping someone who is not paying their rent or has missed rent payments they need specialist help as they may be at risk of eviction but might not realise it.

It is important to identify quickly when people are struggling to pay their rent and to try to identify as early as possible why and if there might be immediate help they can access to avoid a crisis.



FALLEN BEHIND ON RENT



There are lots of reasons why someone might be struggling to pay their rent, including but not limited to:

- the bedroom tax
- the benefit cap
- missed housing entitlements on new Universal Credit claim
- working in a low-paid job
- becoming unemployed
- living with high levels of debt
- fluctuating income eg those on zero-hours contracts
- misunderstanding Universal Credit accounts so not realising a housing element has been paid which needs to be paid to a landlord
- having a rent shortfall caused by Local Housing Allowance so their housing element is less than their rent each month
- having a high level of deductions as a result of sanctions, previous arrears or other debts so the amount of Universal Credit they receive is much lower than it usually would be.

FALLEN BEHIND ON RENT

 If the person is claiming Universal Credit it's important to check that they have applied for their housing entitlement.

 **Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP)**
People struggling to pay rent may be able to claim extra help from the council called Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP). The council has a limited amount of money for paying out DHPs so may not be able to pay every claim. Their main priorities are to help prevent people from becoming homeless and to help ease financial pressure for vulnerable people who live in Coventry.

 **Who can claim a Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP)?**
To be able to make a claim you must:
-be a resident of Coventry; and
-be receiving Housing Benefit, or Universal Credit with an award for rent costs.
Customer telephone lines will be open Monday to Friday between 11am – 2pm. If you need to contact them outside of these hours email DAGteam@coventry.gov.uk.

 **REMEMBER** - A tenant is still liable for their rent payments and should therefore maintain these payments where possible.

 Establish if they have received any letters detailing their rent arrears or asking them to attend court – if they do, they will need specialist help.

FALLEN BEHIND ON RENT

Help for people who have letters from their landlord and court paperwork

-  Should you have a tenant who has a notice of seeking possession or who receives notice of a court date it is important that you refer them Central England Law Centre at the earliest opportunity so that we are able to try and resolve the tenant's issues before they are required to go to Court.
-  They can make contact via our Covid-19 helpline team or they can email housingenquiries@centralenglandlc.org.uk. We are worried that people may be building up debt and by the time there is a court hearing it will be difficult to help them. We would like to see them now and work with them to resolve the problems before the hearing takes place.
-  It is important that tenants are aware that for the foreseeable future Nuneaton County Court will be dealing with possession cases and that they may be required to travel to Nuneaton for their hearing.
-  It is important that tenants attend Court to obtain legal advice from the Duty Advisors. They will offer advice and representation on the day to tenants facing possession hearings/ evictions and will be present for all Review and Substantive hearings.

FALLEN BEHIND ON RENT ACTION



It is important to try and establish the reasons why someone has fallen behind on their rent -doing a quick budget can help to identify this.



Ask them if they get support with their housing costs and how much their rent is. Tenants housing entitlement can be being paid to them as part of their Universal Credit and they have not always passed this onto to their landlord.



Encourage them to communicate their difficulties with their landlord especially if it is at an early stage



Think about if they might be able to apply for DHP from the council – our Rights in the Community helpline can support with this.



The information in the rest of this guide will help you to try and identify why a person might be at risk of eviction. Get them talking to you today about what is going on.



Tenants claiming Universal Credit usually have an entitlement to a housing element. Log on to check if this is in payment. Rent arrears can quickly accrue. Other things can affect their entitlement, such as household composition and whether they have a disability.



Ask if they have received any letters from their landlord or court about their rent arrears or asking them to attend court – if they do, they will need specialist help from the Law Centre.

NO RECOURSE TO PUBLIC FUNDS

If you are supporting someone who has a No Recourse to Public Funds on their visa it can feel overwhelming to help them.

There are lots of complexities to someone's status and this can leave them feeling vulnerable and you confused.

Due to the complexity it is always essential to seek specialist advice on what to do next to help them.

NO RECOURSE TO PUBLIC FUNDS



How is NRPF defined?

No recourse to public funds (NRPF) refers to people who are subject to immigration control and have no entitlement to welfare benefits or public housing.



Note that this restriction applies to welfare benefits, homelessness assistance and local authority allocation of social housing only.



It does not prevent migrants with NRPF from accessing other publicly-funded services such as healthcare, although these may be subject to restrictions based on nationality and immigration status.



All pregnant women, regardless of their immigration status, are entitled to free NHS prescriptions, sight tests, glasses and contact lenses and free NHS dental care throughout their pregnancy and for 12 months after giving birth. They need to have a valid maternity exemption certificate to be exempt from charges.



Having no recourse to public funds is not necessarily a problem – NRPF migrants can be studying, working or living in the UK providing they meet the required immigration controls and can support themselves.



For voluntary sector services, it is those clients who have never been or are no longer self sufficient, or whose immigration status has changed or was never regularised, who are likely to present as NRPF with no means of support.



This can often be after a long period of destitution or after employment arrangements or support networks have broken down.

NO RECOURSE TO PUBLIC FUNDS



NRPF is not always a permanent state. Some people's circumstances change over time so that they become eligible for public funds, for example:

- Asylum seekers who have been granted refugee status, humanitarian protection or old-style discretionary leave to remain become entitled to claim welfare benefits because they are granted leave to remain with recourse to public funds.
- A visa over-stayer who has made a successful human rights application and as a result has been granted limited leave to remain without a restriction on public funds.
- EU and EEA EEA migrants who start job seeking gain the right to reside, can pass the habitual residence test and become eligible to apply for welfare benefits, provided that they have resided in the Common Travel Area for a minimum period of three months. However, they cannot claim housing benefit so may still require housing support.



EEA migrants who start working will be exempted from the Habitual Residence Test and can claim work benefits.



However, in order to demonstrate that they are a worker in order to claim benefits they must satisfy the DWP's 'Minimum Earnings Threshold' which involves providing evidence of three months' earnings at a specified minimum level.

NO RECOURSE TO PUBLIC FUNDS ACTION



Reassure the person that getting specialist help is in their best interest to try and resolve their difficulties



Consider if they might be able to get help from local charities - Carriers Of Hope, Refugee and Migrant Centre



Advise them that help from the Rights in the Community helpline is free and confidential



Link them to the food offer in Coventry- remember the food bank is zero cost and can be used to support in an emergency



Find out as much as possible about the details of their status and listen to anything they tell you about recent life changes

Note: You must be a qualified professional to give immigration advice. Anybody requiring immigration advice should be referred to the Law Centre

CALL OUR RIGHTS IN THE COMMUNITY HELPLINE



07957 711080 / 07496 881145
help@centralenglandlc.org.uk

WE CAN SUPPORT YOU TO FIND THE RIGHT HELP OR USE
THE RESOURCES BELOW:

Universal Credit

CAB Help to
Claim:

0800 144 88848

Coventry
Independent
Advice
Services:

024 7652 1101

Council Tax

Law Centre:

centralenglandlc.org.uk/council-tax-debt

Coventry City
Council:

024 7683 1111

CAB:

024 7625 2047 /
mas@coventrycab.org.uk

Coventry
Independent
Advice Services:

024 7652 1101

National Debtline:

0808 808 4000

Health and Wellbeing

Carers Trust
Heart of
England:

024 7663 2972

Financial
support for
bereavement:

moneyadvice.service.org.uk/encategories/when-someone-dies

Food & Fuel

Food network:

08085 834 333
coventry.gov.uk/emergencyfoodnetwork

Free school
meals:

gov.uk/apply-free-school-mealshealthystart.nhs.uk/how-to-apply/

Crisis Grants:

08085 834 333

Rent

Discretionary
Housing
Payment:

DGATeam@coventry.gov.uk

(Citizen
Tenants) Money
Advice:

0800 138 7777

Homeless
Prevention:

024 7683 4025

NRPF

CRMC:

02476 227254 /
info@covrefugee.org

Carriers of Hope:

referrals@carriersofhope.org.uk

Food network:

08085 834 333

Clothing Coventry:

carriersofhope.org.uk/clothing-coventry/