



# Money Guidance Service Toolkit

## Factsheet 7 – Debt advice and support

If your financial commitments are becoming unmanageable and you have debts you cannot afford to repay, it is important not to ignore them.

We know it's not easy to open up about gambling and financial problems, but not dealing with your debt is likely to make the situation worse and make you more anxious.

### Top tips for dealing with your debts

- Seek advice from a free, non-profit debt advice organisation as soon as possible – we've listed some on the next page. There are many different options for dealing with debt, and an adviser can explain these to you. The sooner you get advice, the better.
- Some old debts may be Statute Barred if you have not made a payment for a while, or have not contacted the creditor for a few years. In such cases, seek advice before contacting the creditor.
- The pressure of not dealing with all of your debts will make it harder to keep to a budget and will not help gambling recovery. Some people have told us this stress even triggered a relapse.
- Think about speaking to your partner or a trusted family member about your financial difficulties. Some people in recovery tell us that they initially felt unable to tell their loved ones about all their debts. Support

from a loved one can help you deal with your debts and it helps if there is transparency in the relationship.

### What happens when you see a debt adviser?

- A debt adviser will never judge or make you feel bad about your situation. They won't expect you to stop gambling if you're not ready, but they can help you find support.
- The adviser will ask you for some information about your circumstances and debts and suggest ways to deal with debts, some of which you might not be aware of.
- The adviser will be able to speak to you about prioritising your debts and will advise you and your partner, if you have one, about liability for debts (including joint debts).
- The adviser will advise you about the suitable options available for dealing with your debt and then agree on what actions to take to get things started.

## Loan sharks and illegal money lenders

Anyone lending money on a commercial basis must be licenced to lend money. If the lender isn't licensed, they could be an illegal money lender, also known as a loan shark.

Loan sharks often appear as friends or neighbours doing you a favour. But they charge extortionate interest, may threaten you if you do not pay, and any debt with them might increase no matter how much you pay back.

If you think you may have borrowed from a loan shark, you have done nothing wrong. You can contact your area's Illegal Money Lending Team if you're concerned about a potential loan shark. You can choose to remain anonymous.

### Illegal Money Lending Teams:

#### England

[Stop Loan Sharks](#)

0300 555 222

#### Scotland

[Scottish Illegal Money Lending Unit \(SIMLU\)](#)

0800 074 0878

#### Wales

[Stop Loan Sharks Wales](#)

0300 123 3311

#### Northern Ireland

[NI Direct Consumerline](#)

0300 123 6262

### Debt Advice

You can access debt advice through different channels: face-to-face, telephone and online.

Some organisations charge for debt advice, but you can get free, confidential advice from one of the organisations listed below:

- [StepChange](#) or call 0800 138 1111 – For help across the UK
- [PayPlan](#) or call 0800 072 1206 – For help across the UK
- [National Debtline \(England, Wales and Scotland\)](#)
- [Citizens Advice \(England and Wales\)](#)

- [Money Advice Scotland](#)
- [Citizens Advice Scotland](#)
- [Advice Direct Scotland \(moneyadvice.scot\)](#)
- [Northern Ireland](#)
- You can also use the [MoneyHelper Debt Advice Locator tool](#) to find free and independent advice online, by telephone or face to face.

If you are self-employed or run a small business and have personal or business debts, contact [Business Debtline](#) or [PayPlan](#) for further advice.



## We've got you.

We understand that money problems can feel overwhelming.

Whether you are looking for support for yourself, a friend or a family member, GamCare can help.

When you're ready to talk, we're ready to listen.

Call us free on **0808 8020 133** or chat to an adviser at [www.gamcare.org.uk](http://www.gamcare.org.uk)