

Cost of living crisis - paying your bills and managing debts

Newcastle City Council also has a dedicated webpage on the [cost of living support](#) available in the city.

1. What should I do if I'm struggling to pay my bills or debts?

If you find yourself in a situation where you're struggling to pay your bills or debts, you should **not** borrow more money. If you take out more credit now, you could end up in a worse situation. You should also **not** rush into an insolvency option, such as a Debt Relief Order (DRO), bankruptcy, or Individual Voluntary Arrangement (IVA). If you are considering one of these options, you should always speak to a debt advisor first to ensure that you understand what it means and the consequences.

You should try to maintain payments to your priority bills, which are your mortgage or rent, Council Tax, gas, electricity, water, and any Magistrates' Court fines. If you are struggling to pay these bills, please see the advice below or contact **Money Matters** on **0800 1707 008** (Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 4pm).

2. Maximising your income

You may want to consider a benefit check to make sure you are receiving all the income you are entitled to:

- Visit <https://www.newcastle.gov.uk/services/welfare-benefits/welfare-rights-and-money-advice/check-your-entitlement-benefits-online> or www.entitledto.co.uk/ to check that you are getting the full amount of support that you are entitled to
- Visit www.newcastle.gov.uk/welfare-rights or phone Newcastle City Council's **Welfare Rights Service** on **0191 277 2627** (Monday to Friday from 9.30am to 12 noon) to get advice about your benefits.

3. New Cost of Living Payments from Spring 2023

Low income households across the UK will get up to £1,350 from the Government in 2023/4 to help with the cost of living. Exact payment windows will be announced closer to the time but are spread across a longer period to ensure a consistent support offering throughout the year. They will be broadly as follows:

- **£301** – First Cost of Living Payment – **between 25 April & 17 May 2023**
- **£150** – Disability Cost of Living Payment – **between 20 June 2023 & 4 July 2023**
- **£300** – Second Cost of Living Payment – **between 31 October & 19 November 2023**
- **£300** – Pensioner Cost of Living Payment – **from November 2023**
- **£299** – Third Cost of Living Payment – **during Spring 2024**

4. Mortgage and rent

If you receive any paperwork relating to losing your home, such as a notice of seeking possession, court paperwork or a warrant of eviction, please contact **Money Matters** for advice on **0800 1707 008**, or email moneymatters@newcastle.gov.uk

4.1 Rent

YHN tenants can contact YHN by phone (**0191 278 8600**), email (yhn@yhn.org.uk) or [online](#). A special [advice page on rent, finances and benefits](#) has been developed which includes information on how residents can contact YHN if they need support or are having difficulty paying the rent.

If you're a tenant of a [Registered Social Landlord \(RSL\)](#) you should contact your landlord to let them know you're struggling. Many have internal advice and support teams that can help you.

If you are a private tenant, you can contact the Council's [Private Rented Service](#). They provide support and advice to private tenants to ensure everyone in our city lives in safe, secure and a well-managed home.

If you are struggling to pay your rent because your income is low, and you have less than £16,000 in savings, you may be entitled to [Universal Credit](#). This will include an amount towards your rent. For more information visit our webpage [The move to Universal Credit | Newcastle City Council](#)

4.2 Mortgage

If you're having trouble paying your mortgage, your first step should always be to contact your lender. Your lender can discuss your options with you and can offer suggestions, including:

- temporary payment arrangements;
- lengthening the term of your mortgage; or
- switching temporarily to interest-only repayments

If you're claiming certain benefits you might be able to claim help with your mortgage interest payments. This is called [Support for Mortgage Interest \(SMI\)](#) and is offered as a repayable loan.

You should also check if you have mortgage payment protection insurance, also called accident, sickness and unemployment insurance. This type of insurance may be able to help with your mortgage repayments if your income has fallen because of redundancy, accident or sickness. For more information and advice visit moneyhelper.org.uk.

5. Council Tax

If you are struggling to pay your Council Tax due to a reduction in your income, you may be eligible for [Council Tax Reduction](#) or a discount or an exemption on your bill. More information and how to apply can be found [here](#).

If you are struggling to pay your Council Tax, Newcastle City Council can spread your instalments over 12 months. You can apply to do this online [here](#) or by emailing council.tax@newcastle.gov.uk

Newcastle City Council may also be able to delay recovery action depending on your circumstances, but you must contact Revenues and Benefits to discuss your account. There is a dedicated online form to use to explain your circumstances, which you can

complete [here](#). You can also email council.tax@newcastle.gov.uk or **phone 0191 278 7878** and ask for Council Tax. If you are struggling to make your regular payment because you are waiting for a new benefit award, you can let Revenues and Benefits know by completing an online form [here](#) or emailing council.tax@newcastle.gov.uk

There are different ways to make your payment, which can be found [here](#). If you are unable to use the automated payment line, please phone **0191 278 7878** and ask for Council Tax or email council.tax@newcastle.gov.uk

6. Gas and electric

The [Energy Price Cap](#) is currently £1,834 for the average household. From 01 January 2024 the price cap will rise by £94 to £1,928 per year. **But remember, this isn't the maximum you'll pay, it's based on an average household with typical use – if you use more, you pay more.**

If you are struggling with your gas and electric bills or worried about heating your home, you should contact your supplier in the first instance. You can also visit the [Ofgem](#) or the dedicated [Council webpage](#) for information on saving energy and reducing your bills at home.

7. The Great British Insulation Scheme

You may be able to get free or cheaper insulation to reduce your home's energy bills if your home:

- has an energy performance certificate (EPC) of D to G - [check your EPC](#)
- is in Council Tax bands A-D in England - [check your Council Tax band](#)

You can be a homeowner, landlord or tenant (either renting privately or from a housing association). If you're a tenant, speak to your landlord before you apply. You'll need their permission before any insulation can be installed. For further information visit [Apply for support from the Great British Insulation Scheme - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

8. Water Bills

If you are struggling to pay your water bills [Northumbrian Water](#) have a range of support schemes that may be able to help.

9. Other debts

If you would like to discuss your options to deal with your debts, please contact Money Matters for advice on **0800 1707 008** or email moneymatters@newcastle.gov.uk

10. Businesses and self-employed

If you own a business or are self-employed, phone [Business Debtline](#) on **0800 197 6026**.

11. Further information

Information on support for residents in financial hardship is available on our webpages for [welfare rights](#), [debt](#) and [homelessness](#).

Newcastle City Council also has a dedicated webpage on the [cost of living support](#) available in the city.

[InformationNOW](#) provides extensive information on the support available in the city.

For queries relating to the support available to promote financial inclusion and prevent homelessness, contact the Active Inclusion Newcastle Unit at activeinclusion@newcastle.gov.uk

This information was accurate at the time of publishing (December 2023).