

# MONEY MATTERS

## WORRYING ABOUT MONEY?

The Association has formed a partnership with the Community Money Advice Service to provide support and assistance to our tenants in these financially challenging times.

- Attitudes to money and priorities
- Managing income and spending
- Budgeting
- Increasing income and reducing spending
- Saving and borrowing money
- Money pressures and debt

These things can affect all of us in different ways and the West Cumbria Community Money Advice working with Westfield Housing Association are interested in helping you to gain control of your situation.

For free confidential and impartial advice please ring **07716 176 204** to arrange a free home visit from one of their 10 trained advisers.



## MONEY SAVING TIPS



Did you know, a 20 cigarettes a day habit could cost you nearly £2,000 a year. For help and advice on stopping smoking see your GP or visit [www.givingupsmoking.co.uk](http://www.givingupsmoking.co.uk)



Visit [www.lastminute.com](http://www.lastminute.com) to source cheap or free deals for days out and theme park tickets.



Did you know, leaving an electrical appliance on standby uses 80% as much energy as it does being on. Switch off lights and appliances.



don't pay over the odds for your gas or electricity contact Home Energy Switch at [www.housing.org.energy](http://www.housing.org.energy) switch or ring 0800 051 5346.

## START SAVING WITH THE CREDIT UNION

With Christmas just around the corner saving may be the last thing on your mind. A Credit Union account can help you save money, get life insurance and low cost loans and are run by local people for local people.

You can save as much or as little as you want, from just £1 a week, and anyone can join. There are over 8,000 people saving and borrowing with credit unions in Cumbria.

Membership of a credit union for just 8–12 weeks means you qualify and can benefit from a great, low interest rate if you borrow money. Credit Unions offer loans at much lower rates than many “doorstep” and other lenders and generally charge an average of 12–13% APR (Annual Percentage Rate).

To contact your local Credit Union just ring (01900) 63642

or contact “Northern Money” at [www.northernmoney.org.uk](http://www.northernmoney.org.uk) or ring them on (0191) 279 4881 who can offer more information on the kinds of services credit unions offer.



Did you know, by turning down your central heating thermostat by 1°C it could cut your heating bill by 10%.



# BENEFITS REFORM

## What does it mean to me?

**Non-dependent deduction:** A non-dependent is someone that lives with you who is over 16 years old and not in full time education. If you have a grown up son or daughter living with you (or someone else who shares your house with you but is not dependent upon you for support) then the amount of rent you have to pay may have gone from April 2011.

This is because the Government is increasing the amount taken off you Housing Benefit entitlement because these 'non-dependents' are expected to help you with your rent.

However, no deduction should be taken if:

- You or your partner are getting the care component of Disability Living Allowance or Attendance Allowance/ or are registered blind.
- The non-dependent is on Pension Credit (which can be claimed by many people aged 60 or over).
- The non-dependent is only staying with you on a temporary basis (in other words your home is not their normal home).
- The non-dependent is under 18 or a full time student.
- The non-dependent is under 25 and getting Income Based Jobseekers Allowance, Income Support, Income Related Employment and Support Allowance and is in the 'assessment phase' i.e. a new claim.

**Future Proposal:** From 2013 the government is proposing to reduce someone's Housing Benefit if they are single, under retirement age and living in a property which is too big for them. This proposal will still need parliamentary approval before it happens.

**Changes in Tax Credits:** Changes to the way Tax Credits are worked out from April 2011 may mean that you only see a small increase in your Tax Credit award, or even a drop.

If you live in a rented property and are already on Housing Benefit, let the Housing Benefit Office know so they can check if you might be entitled to more. If you are not already getting Housing Benefit then you should claim because you might find you are now entitled to some.

**Remember, any child Benefit that you get does not count when Housing Benefit is worked out.**

**And, did you know that over 50% of working people who could claim Housing Benefit don't and so they miss out.**

### Employment and Support Allowance:

If you are currently getting Incapacity Benefit or Income Support because of ill health or disability, then over the next few years your claim will be reassessed and if, after having a medical, you are found to have a 'limited capacity for work' you will be transferred onto the new Employment and Support Allowance (ESA).

If you are awarded ESE you should be no worse off, as benefit levels are being protected.

If you are found fit for work, you can appeal against this decision and you can be paid ESA at a reduced rate until the outcome of your appeal is known.

Otherwise, you may be able to claim Jobseekers Allowance, or if you are a single parent or a carer—Income Support. These will generally be paid at a lower rate than your current Incapacity Benefit or Income Support. How much Housing Benefit you get will depend on your circumstances.

Please contact Catherine or Anthony if you need any further advice or information or contact CAB or West Cumbria Community Money Advice.

## What happens to your benefits if your child goes into further education or college?

Has your child finished school and now planning to go to College? Remember to inform the Child Benefit Office as your Child Benefit payments will

continue as long as your child is in full time education up to the age of 19.

You can still get Child Benefit after your child turns 16 if they're in certain types of education or training—either full-time 'non-advanced' education or 'approved' training.

'Education' counts for Child Benefit if it is full-time, 'non-advanced' education. Your child needs to have started, enrolled or been accepted onto a course that starts before their 19th birthday.

'Full-time' means that, on average, more than 12 hours a week in term time is spent on tuition, practical work, supervised study or taking exams. It doesn't include breaks for meals or homework.

'Non-advanced' education includes the following:

- GCSE
- A Levels
- NVQ/SVQ Level 1, 2 or 3
- BTEC National Diploma, National Certificate and 1st Diploma
- SCE higher grade or similar.

This isn't a complete list. If you're unsure whether your child's education counts, you can contact Child Benefit Officer helpline on 08436 380 390 for further advice.

## In-Work Benefits

Working or going back to work after a period out of work? Make sure you check your benefits entitlement.

Sometimes when people are earning a wage they struggle on a low income because they think they can't get benefits.

You might be entitled to four weeks extended housing benefit if you have been on job seekers allowance or income support for six months.

Contact us on (01900) 602906 or email us on enquiries@westfieldha.org.uk for more details.

## DITCH YOUR DOORSTEP LENDER

**Do you have a loan with a doorstep lender, or worse, a loan shark? Would you like to take control of your finances and pay less each month?**

DRAMA is a Cumbrian Partnership offering a Handy Loan service in our area. It's available to anyone over 18 years of age and loans are processed within 7 days. They also offer additional money guidance if you enquire.

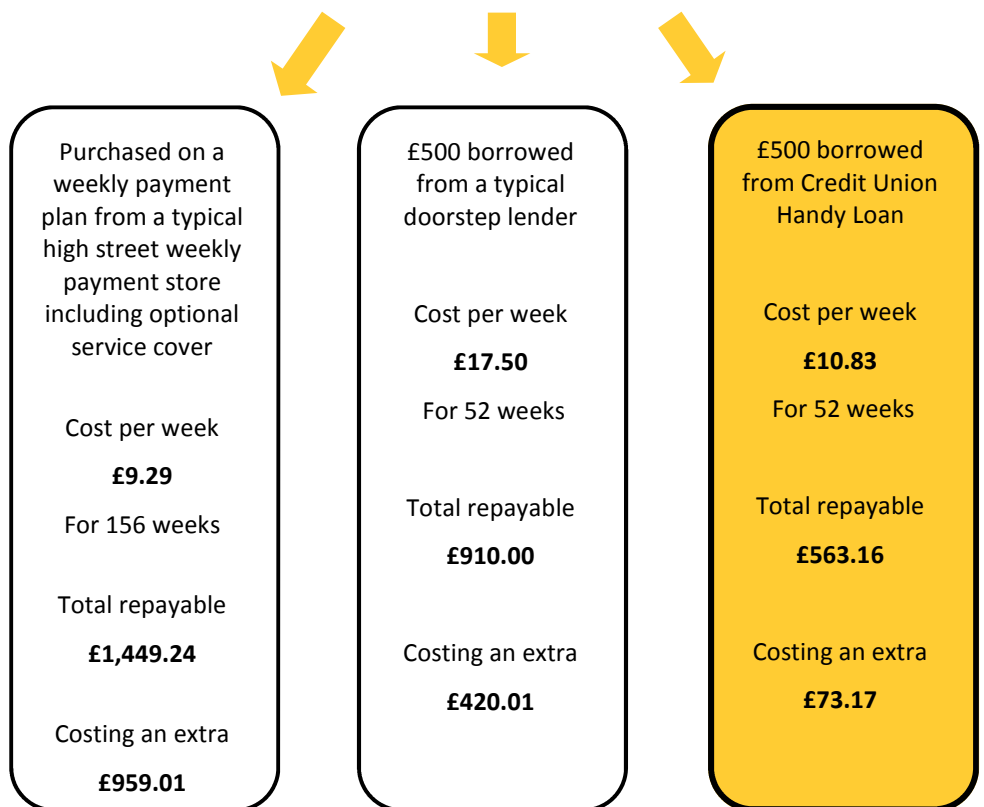
Replacing or purchasing a household item such as furniture or domestic appliance can be extremely expensive. Often when we need to purchase items such as these, it is necessary to lend money to pay for these items or to purchase them under a credit agreement. Some companies who offer loans and credit charge extremely high rates of interest and items can end up costing double.

Just look at the difference below:



**Washer/Dryer**

**RRP £489.99**



**For more information ring Handy Loans Service on (01900) 607550**

**(all above rates correct at time of print 07.06.11)**

### Already paying a high interest loan? Don't despair

Handy Loans may also be able to reduce the interest you are currently paying by paying off your current loan and transferring it to a Handy Loan.

### Are you receiving a disability benefit? Things are Changing

Over the next few years the government is phasing out some disability benefits.

- Incapacity Benefit
- Income Support paid because of an illness or disability
- Severe Disablement Allowance

People who receive these benefits will be reviewed to see if they are eligible for Employment and Support Allowance (ESA).

The change will not affect people who are already being paid ESA or people who reach state pension age before 6th April 2014.

The Welfare Reform bill is currently going through parliament. One part of the bill is the introduction of a Personal Independence Payment to replace Disability Living Allowance. It is proposed that the Personal Independence Payment can be claimed by disabled people whether they are in or out of work. It will also introduce a more objective assessment of need and allow disabled people to be reassessed over time—something that is lacking in the current system—to ensure everyone receives the correct support if their needs change.

**There are a number of places you can go for help with working out your benefit:-**

- **West Cumbria Community Money Advice Team on 07716 176 206.**
- **Citizens Advice Bureau on (01900) 604735.**
- **One of our Housing Services Officers, Catherine or Anthony on (01900) 602906**

## DON'T PAY OVER THE ODDS FOR YOUR GAS AND ELECTRIC

My Home Energy Switch at [www.housing.org.uk/energyswitch](http://www.housing.org.uk/energyswitch) or ring 0800 051 5346. This lets you compare all energy suppliers simply and quickly to make sure you're getting the best price for your gas and electricity. The process is simple, fast and effective and can be easily completed in a few minutes via a dedicated webpage or free customer helpline.

Why use My Home Energy Switch?

- They will take care of all the paper work for customers—you can simply sit back, relax and enjoy cheaper energy bills!
- There is no charge to use their comparison and switching service
- "My Home Energy Switch" is delivered in partnership with uSwitch.com, the number one energy comparison site
- They have a dedicated phone line to answer all queries and help staff and tenants switch
- They compare all UK energy suppliers
- It only takes a few minutes to compare and switch
- They are completely impartial and strive to get the best deal for housing association tenants
- All that's needed is a recent energy bill (if you don't have one, simply call 0800 051 5346.

They can also help you compare the market for cheaper insurance.

## HELP FROM UTILITY GRANTS

Some energy and utility suppliers have set up independent charitable trusts which give grants to some of their customers to help them pay for gas, electric, water or other household arrears. If you are behind with your payments or in arrears with your bills you can apply for grants.

Here are the top 5 grants:

### GAS AND ELECTRIC GRANTS

**British Gas Energy Trust:** To apply to the trust you must be a current domestic account holder (person/ persons named on the bill) of British Gas or Scottish Gas. Grants are available to help individuals and families in need to meet arrears of energy charges and other household bills and costs. If you would like to apply for help, you will need to fill in the Trust's application form. You can either apply online, by email or by post.

Please visit their website at [www.britishgasenergytrust.org.uk](http://www.britishgasenergytrust.org.uk) or ring 01733 421 060 for more information.

**Energy Advice:** Homeheat gives advice on utilities (including grants and reduced tariffs) to people struggling to pay their bills and keep warm.

You can call 0800 33 66 99 or check their website at [www.homeheathelpline.org.uk](http://www.homeheathelpline.org.uk) for more information.

### WATER GRANTS

**United Utilities:** If you are in hardship and unable to pay your water charges, for example due to illness, family crisis or losing a job then you may be able to receive a grant from united utilities trust fund.

Please ring 0845 179 1791 or visit [www.uutf.org.uk/app](http://www.uutf.org.uk/app).

**United Utilities** also have "Arrears Allowance Scheme" to help reduce water debts. For example, if you pay £3.00 a week for current charge and £1.00 per week for arrears, you will have paid £52.00 in 32 weeks. Because you have paid £52.00 United Utilities will reduce your arrears by a further £52.00.

Please visit [www.unitedutilities.com/arrearsallowance](http://www.unitedutilities.com/arrearsallowance) for more information.

**Single Person's Household Tariff:** If you live on your own, unable to get a water meter and think you are paying too much water bill, you can apply for single persons household tariff which was £244.19 in 2010/2011.

Please visit [www.unitedutilities.com](http://www.unitedutilities.com) or ring 0845 746 2222 (if you have a water meter) or 0845 746 1100 (if you do not have a water meter).

**If you or someone you know would like this information in large print, on CD or in Braille then please contact Lynn on (01900) 602906**