

gentoo

# Your Money Matters



# Your Money Matters

Money can feel like a difficult topic – one that’s often avoided or misunderstood. But financial wellbeing isn’t just about numbers. It’s about feeling in control, being prepared for the unexpected, and having access to the right support.

This guide is designed to help you feel more confident, informed, and supported when it comes to your finances.

## Why it matters:

**Reduces stress:** Money worries are one of the leading causes of stress. Feeling financially secure can improve mental health and overall wellbeing.

**Supports your goals:** Whether you are planning a holiday or starting work, financial wellbeing means you can plan to achieve what matters most to you.

**Builds resilience:** Having a financial safety net means you’re better equipped to handle life’s challenges—like unexpected bills or changes in income.

**Improves productivity:** When you are in control you are more calm and focused and can concentrate on what’s important.



# We understand the barriers

Talking about money can feel uncomfortable. You might have thought:

- “I’m hopeless with money” – **That can change. Our Budgeting Planner is a great place to start.**
- “Life’s too short to worry about it” – **True, but a little planning now means more freedom later.**
- “I don’t know who to talk to” – **We’re here for you with free, impartial guidance and trusted resources.**
- “I’ll look stupid” – **You won’t. Mistakes happen. What matters is how we move forward.**

## We’re here to help

Financial wellbeing isn’t just about how much money you have, it’s about feeling in control and having access to the right support when you need it.

Feeling financially well means peace of mind, confidence, and being able to plan for the future. Whatever your situation, help is available. Our Neighbourhood Teams and specialist Money Matters Team can offer practical advice and guidance tailored to you.

### How to get support

- Call us on 0191 525 5000 and choose option 3
- Visit [www.gentoogroup.com/helpwithmoney](http://www.gentoogroup.com/helpwithmoney) for information, advice and tools to help manage your money

If you’d like to contact your Neighbourhood Coordinator, you can find their details here:

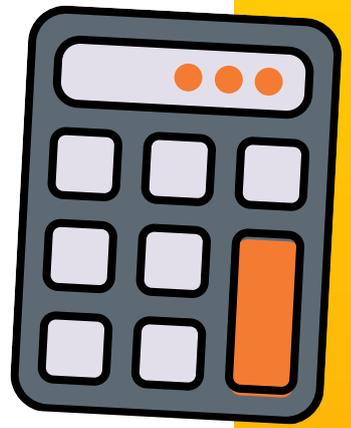
[www.gentoogroup.com/neighbourhood-coordinators](http://www.gentoogroup.com/neighbourhood-coordinators)

We’re here to **support** you every step of the way.

# 5 steps to financial wellbeing



# Maximise your income



1. Complete a benefit check:  
<https://gentoo.entitledto.co.uk/home/start>
2. Check benefits for everyone in your household
3. Check your benefits again when changes in circumstances happen (like when your child leaves school or someone moves out). Our benefit checker helps you understand how earning more could affect the income you already receive.
4. Employment is one of the best ways to increase your income. If you need support to find a job try one of these providers:

## Out of work?

- Triage <https://trriage.net/>
- The Education Development Trust <https://www.edt.org/what-we-do/futures/> might be able to help to get you in the right place to start to look for work.

## In work?

- Talk to your employer about in-work **apprenticeships** to develop your skills and get you moving up the ladder.
- Develop your skills through **free online courses** or adult learning courses. <https://sunderlandcollege.ac.uk/courses/adult-learning/>
- Arrange a course in your workplace through **The Sunderland Skills and Inclusion Programme (SSIP)**

## Top tips

Did you know that school-age children aged 16–18 can also work? If they're in full-time education (not including apprenticeships), their parents' welfare benefits won't be affected.

A part-time job can be a great way for your child to earn money, build skills and gain confidence for the future.



# Budgeting: Take charge of your money

Budgeting is essential to taking control of your money.

Try this five-step process:



## Top tips

- Use budgeting apps like Snoop or Moneyhub to track spending.
- Set no-spend days or try a “no-spend month” to reset habits.
- Round-up savings: many banks offer features that round up purchases and save the difference.
- Work out what you have left each month and then divide it by 5 and limit yourself to spending only this amount each week.

# Reduce your outgoings, manage and save money



## Support to help pay bills

- Help from the Council: Contact your local council for help with essentials like food and energy.
- Winter Fuel Allowance and Warm Home Discount schemes: No need to do anything, those eligible will receive this automatically.
- Lightning Reach can help you find and apply for financial support from grants, funding from your local council and help with your bills, all in one place <https://www.lightningreach.org/>.

## Energy and water costs

- Switch suppliers or tariffs using comparison sites like MoneySavingExpert or Which? to find better deals.
- Use a smart thermostat and lower it by 1–2°C to save on heating.
- Did you know Gentoo can apply to Northumbrian Water for a Water Rate Reduction for those on a low income, welfare benefits or young people leaving care? Call us on **0300 123 2004**.
- HEAT: helps vulnerable households access free energy-saving upgrades, expert advice, and referrals to trusted partners for lasting support. [www.heat-thewisegroup.co.uk](http://www.heat-thewisegroup.co.uk).
- Green Doctor: free, impartial advice to help you save energy, and access other services. [www.groundwork.org.uk/north-east-and-cumbria/get-support/green-doctors/](http://www.groundwork.org.uk/north-east-and-cumbria/get-support/green-doctors/).
- Take shorter showers and fit a low-flow showerhead to cut hot water costs.
- Unplug devices when not in use to avoid phantom energy usage.



**Top tip:** Use a whole market switching site to help. Money Helper provides guidance and suggests:

- [energy.which.co.uk](http://energy.which.co.uk)
- [www.moneysavingexpert.com/cheapenergyclub/](http://www.moneysavingexpert.com/cheapenergyclub/)

## Broadband and mobile

- Review your contracts regularly, many providers offer better deals to new customers.
- Considering switching to a SIM only deal.
- Check social tariffs and use employer rewards.
- Use price comparison tools and don't be afraid to haggle!

## Shopping and lifestyle

- Switch to supermarket own brands.
- Sell unused items on Vinted, eBay or Facebook Marketplace.
- Cancel unused subscriptions and review direct debits regularly. Remember to check these on your phone and/or with your bank.
- Freecycle: give and get free unwanted stuff [www.freecycle.org](http://www.freecycle.org).
- Sunderland City Council Community Care: help with refurbished furniture or white goods [www.sunderland.gov.uk/community-care-support](http://www.sunderland.gov.uk/community-care-support).
- There are some great re-use stores in Sunderland, including Shelter, British Heart Foundation and Salvation Army. Revive and CSS also share updates and available items on their Facebook pages, so it's worth keeping an eye on those too.

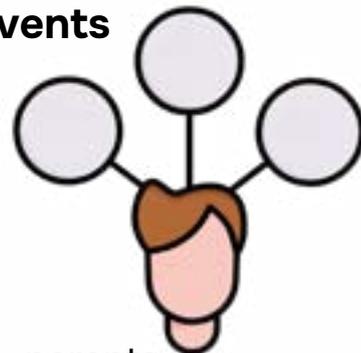
## Car maintenance cost-saving tips

- Stick to regular servicing to avoid expensive repairs later.
- Check tyre pressure monthly, underinflated tyres increase fuel use.
- Learn basic DIY maintenance like changing wiper blades or topping up fluids.
- Use trusted local garages and ask for quotes before agreeing to work.
- Budget for MOT and repairs by setting aside a small monthly amount.

# Know yourself

Knowing yourself and your habits is really important to maintaining your budget and planning for future events and the unexpected.

This means having an understanding of your relationship with money. It includes:



## Beliefs

Many of our money beliefs come from childhood influences, parents, carers, or other adults. Ask yourself, is this belief true? For example, “Money is hard to manage” or “I’ll never have enough”. Why do I believe this? Often, it’s based on someone else’s experience, not your own.

### How to change beliefs:

- Challenge negative beliefs with facts. If you believe budgeting is restrictive, reframe it as a tool for freedom and choice.
- Replace limiting beliefs with empowering ones such as “I can learn to manage money well”.

## Feelings

Your feelings about money can reduce your confidence with money. If money feels stressful or overwhelming, you might avoid planning or budgeting.

### What helps:

- Recognise the feeling without judgement.
- Take small steps like tracking spending for a week to build confidence.
- Associate money with positive goals (e.g., saving for a holiday or redecorating your favourite room at home).

## Habits

Habits are the behaviours you repeat, often without thinking. Examples: impulse buying, ignoring bills, or saving regularly.

### Improving habits:

- Identify triggers (e.g., shopping when bored).
- Replace with positive actions (e.g., setting a spending limit or using a savings app).
- Start small, change one habit at a time for lasting impact.

## Example

Edward was brought up by his grandparents. He believes that he should always pay his bills first and then he can spend whatever is left. This belief stems from his grandparents' approach to managing money, which worked well for them.

Edward's grandparents always dealt with cash. Each week, his Grandad would bring home his wages and hand them to his Gran. Gran would then divide the money into envelopes for each household bill. Whatever was left went into a jar, and from this, she would give Edward a little money for sweets. This simple, visual system ensured bills were covered and spending was controlled.

Today, Edward follows a similar principle: he pays his bills first and then spends the rest. However, he faces challenges his grandparents didn't. Edward spends all his disposable income and has no savings for Christmas or emergencies. As a result, he often struggles financially towards the end of the month.

### **Positive thoughts, feelings and habits**

- Bills are prioritised and paid on time.
- Strong sense of responsibility towards financial commitments.

### **Areas for improvement**

- No savings for emergencies or seasonal expenses.
- Struggles financially towards the end of the month due to overspending.

### **Recommendations to improve Edward's financial wellbeing**

- Introduce weekly budgeting: Break down disposable income into weekly amounts to control spending.
- Start saving regularly: Even a small amount set aside each month will help build an emergency fund and prepare for occasions like Christmas.
- Use modern tools: Consider budgeting apps or savings pots to replicate the envelope system digitally.

### Why it matters

If Edward doesn't have savings, he could get into debt or feel stressed when surprise costs happen. By planning carefully, he can keep the good habits his grandparents taught him and still use modern tools to manage his money.

# Stay in control



## **A. Review your budget regularly**

Check your budget monthly or whenever a bill amount changes, or a new regular payment is added. Staying on top of changes helps you avoid surprises.

## **B. Review as circumstances change**

If your situation changes, review both your entitlements and your budget. This ensures you're making the most of any support available.

## **C. Start saving**

Even saving £1 a week can help you build a small pot for unexpected expenses. Every little bit counts.

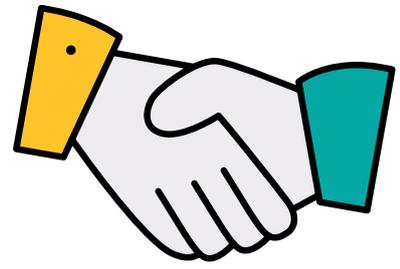
## **D. Ensure that things are fair**

Every adult in the household should contribute. Tools from MoneyHelper can help you start conversations about fair contributions.

## **E. Don't be afraid to get help**

The sooner you address any financial problems, the calmer you'll feel and the less serious they'll become. Asking for help early is a positive step.

# Need extra help?



## Budgeting for a baby

Welcoming a child is exciting, but costs can quickly add up. With a little planning, you can stay in control and make the most of available support.

- **Save with second-hand:** Explore charity shops, community swaps, and online marketplaces like Freecycle or Facebook Marketplace.
- **Borrow items from friends and family:** Many baby items are used for a short time.
- **Healthy Start vouchers:** If eligible, apply at [www.healthystart.nhs.uk](http://www.healthystart.nhs.uk) for help with milk, fruit, and veg.
- **Childcare support: the UK government offers help for working families:**  
Tax-Free Childcare: [www.gov.uk/help-with-childcare-costs](http://www.gov.uk/help-with-childcare-costs)  
Free childcare hours: 15 hours a week for all 3–4-year-olds and 30 hours a week for eligible working parents [www.gov.uk/free-childcare-if-working/what-youll-get](http://www.gov.uk/free-childcare-if-working/what-youll-get)
- **Sure Start Maternity Grant** for your first child, if you are eligible [www.gov.uk/sure-start-maternity-grant](http://www.gov.uk/sure-start-maternity-grant)

## Support with debt worries

If you're struggling financially or worried about debt, remember you're not alone, help is available.

- **Our Money Matters Team** for free, confidential support
- **Citizens Advice** for expert advice on debt, benefits, and budgeting
- **StepChange** free, tailored debt advice and solutions such as repayment plans

## Reducing food costs

There are a range of support measures available.

- Sunderland food banks: [sunderland.foodbank.org.uk/get-help/how-to-get-help/](http://sunderland.foodbank.org.uk/get-help/how-to-get-help/)
- The Bread and Butter Thing: [www.breadandbutterthing.org/become-a-member](http://www.breadandbutterthing.org/become-a-member)
- Holiday and Food Programme: [Links for Life Sunderland](#)

## NECA gambling support

Free, confidential help for anyone affected by gambling, whether you gamble or are impacted by someone else. Contact them on **0191 562 3309** or email [gambling.northeast@neca.co.uk](mailto:gambling.northeast@neca.co.uk)

## Pension Wise

Pension Wise, part of MoneyHelper, offers free appointments for anyone aged 50 or over, regardless of the size of their pension pot. Sessions can be online, by phone, or face-to-face. [www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en/pensions-and-retirement/pension-wise](http://www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en/pensions-and-retirement/pension-wise)

## Sunderland Talking Therapies

A local partnership offering assessments and treatments for common mental health problems to residents of Sunderland, Washington, and Houghton. Find out more at: [sunderlandtalkingtherapies.co.uk/contact/](http://sunderlandtalkingtherapies.co.uk/contact/)



## We're here to help

You can find clear information and advice on our Help with Money page on our website. It explains what support is available and includes helpful tips to help you manage your money.

Visit: [www.gentoogroup.com/helpwithmoney](http://www.gentoogroup.com/helpwithmoney)

If you'd rather speak to someone, call us on 0191 525 5000 and select option 3.

Your Neighbourhood Coordinator may also be able to help or give advice. If you're not sure who your Neighbourhood Coordinator is:

- Visit: [www.gentoogroup.com/neighbourhood-coordinators](http://www.gentoogroup.com/neighbourhood-coordinators)
- Call: 0191 525 5000 and select option 3
- Or visit your local office

[www.gentoogroup.com](http://www.gentoogroup.com)

