

Money Matters Guide

A guide to setting up and managing a home

Useful information
Please keep safe



Financial Inclusion



Contents

	Page
Setting up the Essentials	
Who to Tell When You Move In	1
Rent	2
Council Tax	2
Utilities – Gas, Electricity and Water	3
TV Licence	5
Telephones & Internet	5
Contents Insurance	5
 Managing your Money	
Bank Accounts	6
Savings Accounts	6
Borrowing Money	6
Dealing with Debt	7
Budget Sheet	9

Setting up the Essentials



**Setting up your new home is an exciting time.
It can also be a very stressful time. That is why it is best to plan ahead.**

When planning your new home the first thing you need to do is organise the essentials, such as rent, council tax and utilities (electricity, gas and water). Below is a breakdown of what you need to think about when starting a new tenancy, so you can settle down in your new home while making the most of your money.

Who to Tell When You Move In

With all the commotion of moving it can be easy to forget to inform essential companies of the change in your circumstances/address. The following checklist is a guide to help you.

Checklist			
Council Tax		Bank, Building Society	
Housing Benefit		Insurance Companies	
Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) – State Benefits		DVLA	
Post Office - for mail redirection		Telephone/TV/Internet	
Pension Service		Doctor/Dentist/Optician	
Tax Credits/ Child Benefit		School/Nursery/College	
T.V. licensing		Utilities-Gas/Electric/Water	

Rent

You must pay your rent to NPT Homes. If you do not you could lose your home. If you ever think you may not be able to pay your rent, contact your Community Housing Officer on 0300 777 0000 straightaway and ask for advice.

Housing Benefit

You may qualify for Housing Benefit to cover some or all of the rent. The benefit is means tested and will depend on your income, savings and who else lives in your household. For more information, contact the council on 01639 686868.

Ways of Paying Your Rent

Community Housing Assistant Service

You can pay your rent and contents insurance from the comfort of your home through the Community Housing Assistant Service. Community Housing Assistants can collect rent, note repair requests and give general tenancy advice all in one visit.

Direct Debit

If you have a bank account Direct Debit is an easy way to pay your rent and contents insurance. For more information or to set up a payment please contact 01639 505991 or 01639 506041 or email ddteam@npthomes.co.uk.

Allpay Cards & PayPoint

Using your NPT Homes payment card you will be able to make payments to your account:

- Via telephone
- On our website www.npthomes.co.uk
- At any NPT Homes office
- At any Post Office
- Or at one of many convenience stores throughout the area offering PayPoint service. These stores are easily identified with the PayPoint symbol:



Council Tax

You must pay your Council Tax.
If you do not, the Council could take action against you.

Council Tax Reduction Scheme

You may qualify for Council Tax Reduction Scheme Support to reduce this bill. The benefit is means tested and will depend on your income and savings.

There are also other circumstances that may entitle you to a reduction in Council Tax. For more information contact the council.

Utilities – Electricity, Gas and Water

When it comes to the energy essentials needed to run a home (electricity, gas and water) it is always best to take a few simple steps to ensure you avoid debt and are paying the correct amounts at your new property.

Firstly, take meter readings and record them on the checklist below:

	Old Home			New Home		
	Date	Meter Reading	Supplier	Date	Meter Reading	Supplier
Electricity						
Gas						
Water						

Taking meter readings are recommended for two reasons:

- You will know for certain how much you have used so you will not be over charged at your new property.
- So that you won't be charged for what the new tenants use at your old property

Electricity and Gas

Electricity and gas will make up a big part of the costs of running your home. There are many energy companies and you can save a lot of money if you shop around to find the cheapest deal.

You can also save money by paying your energy bills automatically from your bank or savings account every month by Direct Debit. This is usually the cheapest way to pay for electricity and gas.

Companies also often give a discount if you have both your electricity and gas from the same supplier – this is known as Dual Fuel. It may make managing your bills easier and is often cheaper than buying from separate suppliers.

Did you know? – Pre-paid meters are an expensive way to pay your electricity and gas bills.

Usually energy companies send you a bill every three months. You can save a lot of money if you agree to pay the bills every month instead. The energy company will help set this up.

Warm Homes Discount

You qualify for the discount if your supplier is part of the scheme and you or your partner are:

- 75 or over and getting the Guarantee Credit element of Pension Credit
- Under 75 and only getting the Guarantee Credit element of Pension Credit (you won't qualify if you also get Saving Credit).

Some suppliers offer the discount to other vulnerable people. Check with your supplier for details.

The discount doesn't affect Cold Weather Payments or Winter Fuel Payments.

Water

Having a water supply is essential to the running of a home and the wellbeing of you and your family. Unlike with electricity and gas you do not have a choice in who will supply your water. The supplier for this area is Dwr Cymru Welsh Water.

There are two common ways to pay for water:

- Water meter – you pay for only the water you use
- Water rates – you pay a set amount no matter how much water you use.

Did you know? – If you live alone, a water meter will usually be cheaper but if you have children or use a lot of water then it may not be the best option for you.

Phone 0800 0520145 for a water meter survey. This will help you decide the best option for you.

Welsh Water offer help to people who experience difficulty paying their water charges:

Welsh Water Assist

Welsh Water Assist helps low income households with large families or with a medical condition which means more water is used. If your application for Welsh Water Assist is successful, your charges are capped. Your charges won't be higher than a set amount (e.g. £256 for 2013/14) for the year, helping you budget your finances.

You may qualify if:

- You are in receipt of a means tested benefit and anyone in your household has a medical condition which causes you to use more water or;
- You receive child benefit for 3 or more children under the age of 19 living in your household.

Customer Assistance Fund

If you owe more than £150 in water and sewage charges and have a low credit score you may be eligible for help to clear your debt.

A payment plan is set up to pay your current charges and if you stick to the payments for one year your debt will be cleared. Half is cleared after 6 months and the remainder after 12 months.

This is one off help and cannot be accessed again if you fall behind with future payments.

Water Direct

You can apply for water direct if your arrears are more than £170 **and** you're in receipt of one of the following benefits:

- Income Support
- Income based Job Seekers Allowance
- Pension Credit
- Employment and Support Allowance (income based)
- Universal Credit

Payments will be taken directly from your benefit for your current charges plus a small amount to reduce the arrears.

If you are accepted onto this scheme you will receive a £25 discount on your current year's charge.

For further advice phone Welsh Water on 0800 052 0145

T.V. Licence

You may qualify for a discount if you are blind or partially sighted.

If you are 75 or over you should apply for a free licence.

For further information or to buy your licence visit www.tvlicensing.co.uk

Telephone and Internet

The price of telephone and internet services can vary greatly. There are often deals so it pays to shop around and some companies offer combined T.V., internet and telephone packages.

Insurance

Protecting Yourself and Your Belongings

Unfortunately, accidents happen and the damage caused to your belongings can be costly to fix or replace. Taking out insurance gives you peace of mind in case the unexpected happens. The insurance company will take care of things as long as it is covered by the insurance. When you take out insurance you usually pay the company a set amount of money each year. This can be paid in one amount or you can set up a Direct Debit or other payment method so that the money can be paid each month. Use comparison websites to get your best deal.

Extended warranties: Lots of people take out insurance in case something breaks down such as a washing machine.

You can insure lots of different things for damage, theft and loss:

The contents of your home: You are responsible for insuring your personal belongings with contents insurance. It is vital you protect yourself with insurance as it will help you replace your belongings in the event of theft, flood and other types of insured loss.

Many companies offer contents insurance but NPT Homes has partnered up with Aviva to offer you, our tenant, insurance for the contents of your home at a competitive price with a number of benefits. For more information please contact 0300 777 0000.

Buildings insurance: NPT Homes are responsible for the buildings insurance on its properties. So you don't need to arrange buildings insurance.

When taking out insurance it is important to read the policy information so that you know what is covered by the insurance and what is not.

Managing Your Money

Maximising your Benefit Income

The benefits system can be complicated and many people do not know what to claim. If you would like a benefit check to ensure you are getting what you are entitled to or have a benefit problem please contact the Financial Inclusion Team on 01639 506623.



Bank Accounts

A bank account is a safe and secure place to keep your money. It is easy to set up and it can save you money as well.

How to Set Up a Bank Account

Anyone can set up a bank account. You simply need to be able to show who you are and where you live. This is done by providing a form of identification like a passport, birth certificate, driving licence, rent statement, gas or electricity bill. Just go into any bank and ask for advice on setting up a new account.

How a Bank Account Can Help

Getting a basic bank account is the first step in setting up your finances so you can get the most out of your money.

You can have your wages, benefits and tax credits all paid directly to your bank account so that all your money is in one place, safe and secure. You can use cash machines to check the balance of your account, it is easy to check all your payments have gone in or out and exactly how much money you have at any one time.

When it comes to household bills there is usually a discount given if you pay via Direct Debit from your bank or savings account.

A lot of the best deals for your money can be found online and in order to pay for these, companies often insist on a debit card or credit card, which you cannot get without a bank account.

Savings Accounts

Expensive times such as Christmas, birthdays, holidays and buying new furniture can seem daunting. Putting a little bit of money away regularly is the best way to save. Savings accounts are also a great way to be prepared if the unexpected should happen, such as your washing machine breaking down or your car needing repairs.

Banks, building societies, post offices and other organisations such as the Credit Union all offer savings accounts. If you put your money in a savings account you will always get back what you put in but you may also get interest from the organisation you save your money with.

Borrowing Money

If you need to borrow money you have several options. However, borrowing money always comes with a price. Always ask the lender to show you the total amount that you will have to repay. Repaying a few pounds a week may seem like a good deal but the total amount that you will repay can sometimes add up to hundreds or even thousands of pounds.



The Neath Port Talbot Credit Union

One of the best ways to borrow money is through a Credit Union. Credit Unions aim to help you control your money by saving what you can and borrowing only what you can afford to repay. For more information, contact a member of the NPT Credit Union on 01639 632100.

Website: www.nptcu.co.uk



Moneyline Cymru is set up to provide low cost loans to people on lower incomes. They can also help you with setting up a bank account in order to make your repayments. They can be reached on 01792 293899.

Website: www.elmline.co.uk

Be careful of:

Credit Cards and Store Cards – When you pay for items using a credit or store card you receive a bill at the end of the month. If you do not pay off the whole bill each month you will be charged interest. This is an expensive way to borrow money and the bill can grow very quickly.

Doorstep Lenders – Companies that offer this type of credit usually charge very high interest rates.

It is often the people who can least afford it pay the highest interest simply because they have taken out a loan from doorstep or illegal money lenders. In the past they were often the only place that people could borrow money, but remember there are other more low cost options available now which offer both saving and borrowing to all.

As a simple example:

Doorstep Lender £300 loan over 50 weeks = **£525 paid**

Neath Port Talbot Credit Union £300 over 50 weeks = **£327.20 paid**

Illegal Money Lenders – It is illegal for anyone to lend money unless they are licensed. People without a licence often prey on people who haven't been able to borrow money anywhere else. They can seem friendly but they often charge enormous interest and if you fall behind with your payments they can become very threatening. Wales' illegal Money Lending Unit can be contacted on 0300 123 3311.

Dealing with Debt

Debt can come in many forms and at some time during our lives most of us will overspend and get into debt. There may be outside issues affecting your financial situation, such as unemployment or sickness. Lots of people are in the same situation, never feel ashamed to ask for help.

Get Help! – Don't put off dealing with your debt. If you owe more money than you can afford to repay get help, ask for advice as soon as possible. A debt advisor will need to know about all your income and bills as well as your debts. Try to get as much paperwork as you can and give the advisor as much information as possible.

The following may be able to help you with debt problems:

Citizens Advice Bureau 08444 772 020

www.citizensadvice.org.uk

National Debt Line 0808 808 4000

www.nationaldebtline.co.uk

Money Advice Service 0300 500 5000

www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk

Stepchange Debt Charity 0800 138 1111

www.stepchange.org

Money Made Clear

www.moneymadeclearwales.org

Prioritising Your Debts

Some bills are more important than others. These are called **Priority Debts**.

A debt is treated as a priority where non-payment can result in:

- Being imprisoned;
- Losing your home;
- Being disconnected; or
- Losing essential goods or services.

Below is a list of some priority debts and what could happen to you if you do not pay them.

Priority Debt	What Could Happen
Rent	Loss of your home
Child Support	Bailiffs or even prison
Council Tax	Bailiffs or even prison
Income Tax, National Insurance, VAT	Bailiffs or even prison
Magistrates' Court Fines	Bailiffs or even prison
Electricity/Gas Bills	Disconnection
TV Licence	Fine or even prison
Telephone	Disconnection
County Court Judgements	Bailiffs
Hire Purchase on a Car	Loss of the car
Other Hire Purchases	Loss of goods

You may owe more money to other people and they may get in contact with you but the priority debts will always be more important.

You **cannot** ignore your other bills but you can often arrange to pay them over a longer period. If you are concerned and struggling to manage your debts, specialist debt advice is available from the organisations listed above.

For further information, advice and assistance regarding any of the issues covered in this booklet, please contact the Financial Inclusion Team on 01639 506623 or email financialinclusion@npthomes.co.uk

NPT Homes Money Matters Budgeting Sheet



Budgeting is all about knowing and having control over how much income you have, what your outgoings are and making sure your outgoings are not higher than your income. Using a budget sheet is a good way of controlling your money. Once you know how much money you have coming in, you'll be able to make decisions about the best possible ways to spend it.

NPT Homes' Financial Inclusion Team has come up with this budgeting sheet to help you, our tenants, get a firm understanding of your household income and outgoings.

Please complete this budgeting sheet, sticking to weekly, fortnightly or monthly calculations for each box.

Once you have completed the income and outgoing sections, you will then need to deduct the total expenditure amount from the total income amount. This will leave you with the amount of money you have left to spend each week, fortnight or month to clear any debts or save for a special occasion.

If you need any further help on how to complete your budget sheet or you are experiencing financial difficulties, please contact the Financial Inclusion Team on 01639 506623.

Name:	
Address:	
Number of People in Your Household:	
Number of Bedrooms:	

INCOME			
	Weekly	Fortnightly	Monthly
Wages			
Your Earnings <i>(take home)</i>			
Partner's Earnings <i>(take home)</i>			
Other Income			
Maintenance and Child Support			
Boarders or Lodgers			
Non Dependant Contributions			
Student Loans and Grants			
Other Income			
Benefits			
Income Based Job Seeker's Allowance			
Contribution Based Job Seeker's Allowance			
Income Support			
Working Tax Credit			
Child Tax Credit			
Child Benefit			
Incapacity Benefit or SSP or Employment and Support Allowance			
Personal Independence Payment, DLA or Attendance Allowance			
Carer's Allowance			
Housing Benefit			
Council Tax Reduction			
Universal Credit			
Other Benefit			
Pensions			
State Pension			
Private or Works Pension			
Pension Credit			
Other Pension			
TOTAL INCOME = £			

OUTGOINGS			
	Weekly	Fortnightly	Monthly
Rent			
Council Tax			
Gas			
Electricity			
Water			
Insurance			
Pension and Life Insurance			
Car Expenses (fuel)			
Car Insurance/Tax			
Travel (Public Transport/Taxis)			
Home Phone			
Mobile Phone			
TV Licence			
Internet			
Cable/Satellite			
Housekeeping/Food			
Cigarettes/Tobacco			
Clothing			
Child Maintenance/Support			
Fines			
Lottery/Pools etc.			
Other			
Other			
Other			
Other			
Other			
Other			
Other			
Other			
Other			
TOTAL OUTGOINGS = £			

DEBTS		
Name of Lender	Amount Owed £	Agreed Repayments per Week/Month
Rent Arrears		
Council Tax Arrears		
Fines		
Water Arrears		
Fuels Debts		
Other		
Other		
Other		
Other		
Other		
Other		
TOTAL	= £	£

CALCULATION		
Total Income		£
Total Outgoings		£
INCOME LEFT	=	£

**If your outgoings are more than your income,
please contact our
Financial Inclusion Team on
01639 506623
for money matters advice.**



All information was correct at time of going to print.