



Cost of living crisis – your questions answered

Cost of living

People are getting increasingly worried about the cost-of-living crisis. We've witnessed inflation reach an all-time high, our weekly shopping bills have increased, and we've seen our energy bills shoot up dramatically too – and that's despite the government's domestic price cap.

Certainly, a big part of worry is the 'unknown' and we want to help reduce that. So, we've tackled important questions about the cost-of-living crisis head on in this article.

[Read on to get your cost-of-living questions answered](#)

How can I create a monthly budget?

If you're struggling to make ends meet due to the increased cost-of-living, do not bury your head in the sand. It's essential to detail your income, debt, and spending over the course of at least one month so you have a full overview of where you stand. Be sure to include the following in this inventory; your income, your spending, and list out all your debts. You can then set a monthly budget. This can help you and your family stay on track and regain that all important sense of control. Remember to include everyday expenses in your budget too, such as food, travel, bills and your mortgage.

When it comes to the larger bills that you pay annually, such as car insurance or council tax, divide them by 12 so you can set aside money each month. If possible, try to factor in any unexpected expenses too just in case. You may also wish to set up automatic payments to help ensure bills are paid on time and you avoid late payments or interest rate hikes.

How can I manage my debts?

If you are struggling to manage your debts, you can contact PayPlan. It makes debt advice simple. Getting clear, calm advice about your debts doesn't just take the stress out of your situation, it will also help you to see the best way forward and allow you to put a plan in place. You may also wish to contact Citizens Advice too, who can give you all the right advice to make the right choices.



I know I need to cut out some unnecessary costs, but what should I focus on first?

Consider cutting out some of your subscriptions. You might wish to review your TV and subscription packages first and foremost. Perhaps aim to cut one or two and just keep the one you use the most.

You should also check your phone and broadband tariff to make sure you're on a good deal. It's worthwhile contacting your provider to see where you could be saving money or use a competitor quote to haggle with your current supplier. Don't forget to shop around for your car insurance, home insurance or pet insurance, too. Avoid auto-renewals without doing your research first.

I'm so worried about the cost of living I can barely do anything else. What should I do?

You are not alone; many people are suffering from increased stress and anxiety during this time. Have you considered practising a relaxation technique? Take time to relax each day and give your mind a break from the constant worrying about how you will make ends meet.

Meditating, breathing exercises, or other relaxation techniques like a walk in nature or reading a book are excellent ways to relieve stress and restore some balance in your life. And remember they're all free.

Cost of living crisis FAQ

It doesn't matter how much I try and reduce my energy bills, I just can't meet the monthly payments. What should I do?

If you've tried to save energy by limiting your usage, but you're still struggling to pay your bills, it's time to contact your supplier to see if they can help. You may also be able to negotiate a payment plan if your energy bills are becoming too much.

The energy regulator Ofgem provides information about support you can get if you have a low income, or you're over 67 years old. Visit the Ofgem site to see if you can get help from government schemes like the Warm Home Discount, the Cold Weather Payment, and the Winter Fuel Payment, or from grants and charities.

What guzzles the most energy in my house and what can I do about it?

It's the white goods in your house, such as washing machines, dishwashers, and tumble dryers, that use the most energy.

In fact, research by Uswitch.com suggests that drying three loads a week in your tumble dryer will cost you about £223 a year. With this in mind, try to avoid any unnecessary washes, wash on 30, ideally at night, and dry your clothes on a line or heated airer.

I can't sleep at night worrying about the cost of living, what should I do?

Sticking to a sleep routine is essential. Aim to go to bed at the same time every night and try to wind down before you do – take a hot bath, read a book, or do some stretches. Try to avoid screens late at night and keep your bedroom dark and cool. Keep your bedroom for sleeping only, this means phones, tablets and TVs should be used elsewhere in the house.

Everywhere I look on social media, people seem to be having fun and splurging on activities. I can't afford to do this. What should I do?

Focus on your own financial journey. Comparison, especially when it comes to what you can and can't afford, is never helpful. Trying to achieve someone else's goals or buy their way of life, rather than focusing on your own, could leave you feeling deflated and like a failure.

If social media is becoming too much for you, consider either coming off it entirely or limiting your time on it. Just remember only a small proportion of what you see is real life. Many people are struggling right now, they may just be hiding it really well.

Start Saving at Home

What can I cook at home on a budget?

Try out these budget recipes from the BBC. The culinary experts list out cheap meals you can do for £1 a portion or less.

The one pan sausage pasta is delicious and super simple. The kids will love it too.

How can I cut down on my grocery bills?

As much as possible, plan your meals in advance. This means making (and sticking to) a shopping list. This will not only minimise your chances of buying unnecessary items or falling for flash sales of things that you don't really need, but it will also help you to reduce your food waste.

Meat tends to be more expensive than vegetables, so why not try adding a few vegetarian meals into your week. Likewise, batch cooking recipes tend to work out cheaper, so cook up a storm and then freeze the rest.



Is there anywhere I can find really great deals?

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Will switching banks help with the cost-of-living crisis?

It could help, yes. In fact, Money Saving Expert, Martin Lewis, has urged Brits to check their bank account, to see if they could gain some cash by switching.

Often banks will pay people to switch over to their current account. This means you could earn up to £200 if you change your current account provider. Nationwide, for instance, is offering a £200 incentive to move your current account to them.

But remember to always read the terms and conditions before applying and don't make any rash decisions.

I can't afford to buy a new school uniform for my child. What should I do?

Consider buying your child's uniform second hand? You can get some great deals on Facebook marketplace or at a nearly new sale at school.

You might also wish to check if your local council provides help with the cost of school uniform and PE kit. If your council does not offer help, then ask your child's school directly or look into a school uniform grant.

Check the government website for more details on grants.

Have I failed if I need to ask for help?

Absolutely not. Remember, reaching out is not a sign of weakness and it doesn't mean that you've failed as a provider, parent, or spouse. Rather it just means that you're wise enough to recognise your financial situation needs addressing.

There are several organisations that offer free counselling when it comes to dealing with financial problems.

Whether or not you have a friend or loved one who you can talk to for emotional support, getting practical advice from an expert is always a good idea.



Support Services

Money Advice Service, or call **0800 138 7777** from Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm.

National Debtline, or call **0808 808 4000** from Monday to Friday, 9am to 8pm.

StepChange Debt Charity, or call **0800 138 1111** from Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.

The charity **Mind** also has a money and finances section on its website, which is really useful.

Citizens Advice is a great place to seek guidance.

Follow **Martin Lewis at MoneySavingExpert** for some great cost cutting tips and up to date advice on the cost of living.

If you are struggling to manage your debts, you can contact **PayPlan**

