UK DEBT REPAYMENT PLANNER & REALITY CHECK

FREE WORKSHEET
NO SIGN-UP · NO EMAIL
PRACTICAL, NOT JUDGEMENTAL

Free to print, share and use. A practical starting point for dealing with unsecured debt while protecting priority bills and getting help early when needed.

IF MONEY WORRIES ARE AFFECTING YOUR MENTAL HEALTH
SAMARITANS: 116 123
Free · confidential · 24 hours a day. If you or someone else is in immediate danger, call 999.
You do not have to be suicidal to contact Samaritans.

This is not a “skip coffee” lecture. It is a way to see the full picture, protect the bills that matter most, and use a repayment plan only when it is genuinely affordable. **If the figures do not work, free debt advice is the next step—not failure.**

IMPORTANT
This planner is general information, not personal debt advice. Do not use it to decide whether to stop paying priority bills, enter an IVA, apply for a DRO, or go bankrupt. Get free, independent debt advice first.

01 START WITH PRIORITY BILLS

PROTECT HOME, ENERGY AND ESSENTIALS

Some debts and bills can have more serious consequences if missed. They are often called **priority debts**. Examples can include rent or mortgage arrears, council tax, gas and electricity, court fines, child maintenance, tax debts and essential hire-purchase agreements.

If you are worried you will miss a payment, contact the organisation early. Do not agree to an amount you cannot sustain. A free debt adviser can help you make a full budget and communicate with creditors where appropriate.

02 THE COMPLETE INVENTORY

LIST EVERY DEBT AND ARREAR

Write down every debt, including buy-now-pay-later, overdrafts, catalogue accounts, payday loans, arrears and money owed to friends or family. Flag missed payments, promotional rates ending, joint debts, guarantees, court action or enforcement letters.

Debt / creditor	Balance £	APR %	Min / agreed £	Type	Priority?	Notes / key date
Total unsecured debt	**£______**	**—**	**£______**	**—**	**—**	**Next action:** _______________

Do not assume every debt can be included in every debt solution. Tell an adviser about all debts, assets, income, household members, arrears and court or enforcement letters.

03 THE AFFORDABILITY CHECK

A PLAN MUST BE SUSTAINABLE

MONTHLY TAKE-HOME	ESSENTIAL LIVING COSTS	PRIORITY ARREARS / BILLS
£________	£________	£________
Wages, benefits and regular income after deductions.	Housing, food, travel, utilities, childcare and realistic essentials.	Agreed payments toward priority arrears, if applicable.

YOUR STARTING FIGURE

Take-home income − essential living costs − priority-arrears payments = amount available for unsecured debts.

If this does not cover contractual minimum payments or any amount agreed with a creditor—or leaves nothing realistic for emergencies and variable costs—do not force a snowball. Speak to a free debt adviser before borrowing more, missing payments or agreeing to a new plan.

THE BEST REPAYMENT METHOD IS THE ONE YOU CAN AFFORD EVERY MONTH.

04 BUILD A SAFE REPAYMENT PLAN

FOR MANAGEABLE UNSECURED DEBT

01 Check the budget first. Include irregular but predictable costs: annual bills, school costs, vehicle repairs, prescriptions, clothing and a small contingency. A plan that only works in a perfect month is not affordable.

02 Keep priority commitments protected. Deal with housing, energy, council tax and other priority arrears before directing extra money toward ordinary unsecured borrowing. Contact providers early if you are struggling.

03 Pay contractual minimum payments or any amount agreed with a creditor if you can afford them. If you cannot, get advice. Creditors may offer temporary support or reduced-payment arrangements, but these are not automatic and can affect interest, credit records and repayment length.

04 Choose a target method. Snowball targets the smallest balance first for quicker wins. Avalanche targets the highest interest rate first and will usually reduce total interest. Either can work once essential costs and agreed payments are covered.

05 Roll payments forward and review. When one balance is cleared, redirect that payment to the next target rather than treating it as new spending money. Review balances, rates and income at least every three months.

SNOWBALL OR AVALANCHE?
Snowball: smallest balance first; often easier to maintain because you see progress sooner. **Avalanche:** highest APR first; normally cheaper overall because you reduce costly interest sooner. There is no moral prize for either method—choose the sustainable one.

05 CREDIT AND CONSOLIDATION CHECKS

NOT AUTOMATIC SOLUTIONS

A balance transfer, consolidation loan or refinancing can be useful in some circumstances, but it does not remove the debt. Before applying, check the transfer fee, interest rate after any offer, promotional end date, monthly payment, total repayable, eligibility and whether you could avoid running up new balances.

Do not take out further credit simply to make a plan look affordable. If repayments are already unaffordable, repeated applications can make matters worse. Free debt advice can help you compare options without pressure to buy a product.

AVOID RUSHED DECISIONS
Be cautious of adverts that promise a quick write-off, guarantee acceptance or push you into an IVA. Formal debt solutions can affect your credit record, housing, employment in some roles, assets and future borrowing. Seek free, independent advice before signing anything.

06 THE MONTHLY TRACKER

ONE SHEET PER MONTH

Debt / target order	Start £	Agreed £	Extra £	Paid £	End £	Checked?
1. ________________						
2. ________________						
3. ________________						
4. ________________						
5. ________________						
6. ________________						

Month: ________ · Available for unsecured debts: £______ · Extra paid to target: £______ · Any new borrowing? Yes / No · Next review date: ________

IF THE PLAN IS NOT AFFORDABLE, ADVICE IS THE PLAN.

07 WHEN TO GET HELP NOW

ACT BEFORE IT ESCALATES

- You cannot cover essentials or priority bills
- You are using credit for food, rent or bills
- You are behind on rent, mortgage, council tax or energy
- You have received a default notice, court claim or enforcement letter
- You are only making minimum payments and balances are rising
- You are considering borrowing to pay other debts
- Your income has fallen or your circumstances have changed
- Debt is affecting your health, safety or ability to cope

WELLBEING SUPPORT
If debt is affecting your wellbeing, tell your debt adviser. They can consider extra support and may be able to help you communicate with creditors. If you or someone else is in immediate danger, call 999. Samaritans is available on 116 123, free and 24 hours a day.

08 FREE ADVICE AND FORMAL OPTIONS

GET TAILORED ADVICE BEFORE CHOOSING

MoneyHelper can help you understand which bills to deal with first and locate free debt advice. **StepChange** and **National Debtline** provide free debt advice. An adviser can assess the full situation, including benefits, priority arrears, creditor action, assets and the different rules that apply across the UK.

Depending on circumstances, options may include informal arrangements, a debt management plan, a Debt Relief Order, an IVA, sequestration in Scotland, bankruptcy or another solution. These are not interchangeable, and eligibility differs by nation and individual circumstances.

ENGLAND AND WALES: BREATHING SPACE
If you are in problem debt, a debt adviser may be able to assess whether the Breathing Space scheme is suitable. It can provide temporary legal protections while you receive advice, but it is not a repayment plan and ongoing liabilities may still need to be paid. An adviser can explain what is and is not covered.

DEBT RELIEF ORDERS
A DRO is only for people who meet detailed eligibility rules, which can change. In England and Wales, published conditions include qualifying debts below £50,000 alongside limits relating to surplus income, assets, vehicle value, home ownership and other circumstances. An approved debt adviser must assess suitability and submit an application; do not use this worksheet to self-assess eligibility.

09 USEFUL NEXT ACTIONS

USE OFFICIAL AND FREE SOURCES

1. Use the MoneyHelper Bill Prioritiser to understand which bills need urgent attention.

2. Find free support through MoneyHelper, StepChange or National Debtline.

3. Keep letters, statements and a record of who you spoke to, when and what was agreed. If a creditor contacts you, do not ignore them; tell them you are seeking advice if that is the case.

4. Check nation-specific rules. This worksheet is UK-wide general guidance, but insolvency and debt-relief options differ in England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

USEFUL SERVICES
MoneyHelper: moneyhelper.org.uk | StepChange: stepchange.org | National Debtline: nationaldebtline.org
Free to share. No sign-up or email is required to use this worksheet.

Last reviewed: September 2026 · General information only. Check official guidance and obtain tailored advice before taking action.