

issue 06

COST OF LIVING SUPPORT



newsletter

Welcome to the sixth edition of Cost of Living Support.

The cost of living challenges have exacerbated financial pressures on households. However, this newsletter aims to give you information about what support is available to you within RCT to help with finances and the cost of living. We hope to capture and provide information and support within this newsletter.

What's available in your community?

The Council is providing a range of support for all residents of RCT, the support is continually being developed **so take a look** on the RCT website and share the information with family, friends, clients and colleagues.



SCAN ME

<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/ConsumerAdviceandMoneyMatters/CostofLivingSupport/CostofLivingSupport.aspx>

Benefit Entitlement

Within the UK there is £15 billion in unclaimed benefits. Are you one of those people who may be entitled to support? Don't assume, check it out by visiting: www.entitledto.co.uk. It's quick and easy to do, just have your payslip and household bills information at the ready!

Resident Support

Support is available for RCT residents, if you, friends, family or ones you care for need help then please go to **Resident Support**. Check out the **Gov Wales website** for information on what financial support may be available to you. This ranges from help with your utility bills, council tax reductions, debt advice, help with housing costs, childcare costs, support for health and wellbeing and more!

<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/GetInvolved/RCTTogether/CommunityResilienceHubsandNeighbourhoodNetworks/ResidentSupport.aspx>
<https://www.gov.wales/help-cost-living>

Support services

Case UK deliver mental and physical health support across the UK. They offer the **in-work service** for anyone requiring support whilst they are in work. They also offer the **out of work service** for anyone unemployed. They can offer training, placements, skills development as well as mental and physical health support to help you to get back into work. Case UK also deliver Able futures.

Able Futures supports people in England, Scotland and Wales who are working and living with mental health difficulties. You can access up to 9 months of free support for your mental health. To access their support, you can self-refer by calling them: **0800 321 3137** or via their website:

www.able-futures.co.uk

You can call Case UK Support Line **02921 676213** (Open Mon-Fri 9am-4pm) or visit their website: **www.case-uk.co.uk**

<https://www.case-uk.co.uk/in-workservicewales>

<https://www.case-uk.co.uk/outofworkservicewales>

Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg. Mae croeso i chi gyfathrebu â ni yn y Gymraeg.

This document is also available in Welsh.
You are welcome to communicate with us in Welsh.





While many of us rent our homes, the average cost of renting has increased by 9% from January 2023 to February 2024. This is the fastest annual increase rate on record in the housing market according to the Office for National Statistics.

How much rent can you afford?

Before renting a home, it is important to ensure that you can afford all the costs that come with the property. This includes the rent itself, as well as the rental deposit, council tax, water bill, energy and other monthly costs you have such as food shops, phone bill, internet etc.

Money Helper have a budget planner which can help with this: **Budget Planner | Free online budget planning tool | MoneyHelper**

Money helper also have useful links on how to save money on your household bills.

<https://www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en/everyday-money/budgeting/how-to-save-money-on-household-bills>

<https://www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en/everyday-money/budgeting/budget-planner>

Renting

What to do if you are struggling to pay your rent?

If you are struggling with paying your rent or worried about rent increases, a good place to start is to check if you are entitled to any benefits. This is a free, confidential service and once you input a few details, it will tell you what benefits you could be entitled to: [Benefits Calculator](#)

If you get Housing Benefit or Universal Credit but it's not enough to cover your rent, you can also check if you can apply for a Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP): <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/claiming-discretionary-housing-payments/claiming-discretionary-housing-payments>

You can also check if there are any charity grants and funding you can apply for which you will not have to pay back: <https://grants-search.turn2us.org.uk/>

Speaking to your Landlord or Housing Association.

It may seem scary, but it is important to tell your landlord or the organisation you rent from if you are struggling to pay your rent. You may be able to agree a way forward for you such as:

- Extra time to pay the rent
- A new, more manageable payment plan
- Rent reduction
- Moving to a different property (if in social housing).

If you are struggling with debt, Money helper offer free, impartial advice, information and support:

<https://www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en/money-troubles/dealing-with-debt/debt-advice-locator>

If you are worried about becoming homeless or to check if you qualify for emergency housing please contact Shelter Cymru: **08000 495 495**

<https://sheltercymru.org.uk/contact-us/>

If you are being evicted, the Money Helper website can offer support and advice:

<https://www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en/homes/renting/help-if-youre-being-evicted>

You can contact Money Helper for free, impartial and confidential advice and support:

0800 138 7777

www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en/contact-us/money-guidance

<https://www.entitledto.co.uk/>



Mortgages

What is a mortgage?

A mortgage is a loan from a bank or building society used to buy a property. It is paid back monthly over a set period of time, for example 25 years.

Mortgage calculator

Find out how much you can afford to borrow using the Mortgage affordability calculator from Money Helper:

www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en/homes/buying-a-home/mortgage-affordability-calculator

Remortgaging FAQs

Remortgaging can save you a lot of money, but there are certain aspects to be aware of before you remortgage.

Why should you remortgage?

When you first take out a mortgage deal you might have signed up for a great deal, but the mortgage market is continually changing and new deals become available. Therefore, the deal you currently have may not be the best one for you anymore.

When should I remortgage?

You can remortgage at anytime but if you aren't at the end of your fixed rate term, you might have to pay an early repayment charge, so make sure you check any fees before you switch. Because of this, most people wait until they are at the end of their fixed term rate to avoid additional costs.

This mortgage repayment calculator from money helper helps you to work out the amount you would pay back monthly on different mortgage options: [Mortgage calculator – calculate repayments](#) | [MoneyHelper](#)

<https://www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en/homes/buying-a-home/mortgage-calculator>

What to do if you miss a mortgage repayment.

Make contact with your lender as soon as possible. This will help to minimise the impact and they can help you to find a solution.

Check if you have insurance cover. Mortgage payment protection insurance, also called accident, sickness, and unemployment insurance, can help with your mortgage repayments if your income has fallen because of redundancy, accident or sickness. Check through your mortgage paper work to see if you took this out when you got your mortgage.

Take action to cut costs. Make a budget plan and see if there are any non-essential costs you can cut back on. You can also try shopping around to get the best deal on essential costs such as energy bills, food bills etc. Check out this link on how to save money on household bills: <https://www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en/everyday-money/budgeting/how-to-save-money-on-household-bills>

Speak to a free debt support service. As well as speaking to your lender, you can get free impartial advice from organisations such as:

Money Helper: **0800 138 7777**
www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en/contact-us/money-guidance

Shelter: **08000 495 495**
<https://sheltercymru.org.uk/contact-us/>



Energy Price Cap

Changed on
1st October 2024!

You can use this energy price cap calculator to see how this will affect your bill:

<https://www.moneysavingexpert.com/utilities/what-are-the-price-cap-unit-rates/>

Watch this video which explains the price cap and what you can do about it:



Martin Lewis: Energy Price Cap to rise 10% in October - what you should do now

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3VywmbfVYdk&t=222s>

The energy price cap was introduced in 2019 and limits what you pay for each unit of gas and electric that you use. The cap sets a limit on the maximum amount suppliers can charge for each unit of gas and electricity you use, and sets a maximum daily standing charge (the charge you pay to have your home connected to the grid). There is no limit to what you pay- if you use more energy then you pay more, the less you use, the less you pay.

From 1st October 2024 the price cap will rise by 10%. Bear in mind that each price cap only lasts three months and the cap is predicted to rise again in January 2025.





Emergency fund.

Affinity

Our partners, Affinity connect, run a number of workshops which focus on various aspects of finances with the aim of simplifying the sometimes complex world of finances!

Find out more information and book on by following the links below:

Pre-retirement workshops:

<https://rct.learningpool.com/course/view.php?id=1364>

Your Financial Wellbeing:

<https://rct.learningpool.com/course/view.php?id=1980>

Taking advantage of your pension tax allowance:

<https://rct.learningpool.com/course/view.php?id=2361>

If you would prefer, you can also book onto any of these workshops by calling: **01443 494003**.

We know that the subject of money can be challenging and stressful at times. Please remember that our employee assistance programme is here to support you through challenging times. More information can be found on the following page.

Having an emergency fund is like having a financial safety jacket for life's surprises, such as when the car needs a repair or the boiler breaks down. Life is unpredictable and having an emergency fund is a way of taking control of these unpredictable situations, and knowing you can handle it if/ when they come along.

At a time when saving money is incredibly difficult, our financial wellbeing provider, Salary Finance has put together some resources to get you started. This includes a video on how to **Build an Emergency Fund Fast**, and a **Savings Guide** full of practical ways to save on everyday expenses.

Additionally, Salary Finance have also put together some practical tips for **financial self care**. This is to support your mental health whilst looking after your financial wellbeing.

Remember, through Salary Finance you have options to borrow affordably through salary and learn better money habits.

Find out more at:

home.salaryfinance.com/rctcbc regular money insights, hints and tips from Salary Finance, [click here](#).



Build an Emergency Fund Fast video

<https://youtu.be/OfvvchhcXDA>

<https://learn.salaryfinance.com/rctcbc/uk/the-cost-of-living-squeeze/how-to-create-an-emergency-fund-fast/>

<https://learn.salaryfinance.com/rctcbc/uk/the-cost-of-living-squeeze/the-guide-saving-edition-everyday-spending-hacks-to-save-money/>

<https://learn.salaryfinance.com/uk/the-cost-of-living-squeeze/mind-money-practical-tips-for-financial-self-care/>

https://home.salaryfinance.com/rctcbc?utm_campaign=q2_comms_2024&utm_source=zapier&utm_content=emergency_fund_2024&utm_id=

<https://share.hsforms.com/15d2dMAFGQn60o8WB67XRzg20ymr>



RCT Staff Benefits has launched of our brand-new benefits and discounts app, **Be Saving!**

You can download today to start accessing all your employee benefits:

- Download the app from the App Store (iOS) or Play Store (Android)
- When prompted, login using your registered email address.
- A verification code will then be sent to your registered email.
- Enter the verification code in the app and that's it, you will now be able to access all your benefits, including your Vectis Card, on the go.

Please note, that for employees who currently use our Vectis Card app for local offers, our new Be Saving app is all they will now need to redeem offers in-store, directly from the one app. As such, we will be retiring the Vectis Card App from App Stores, and it will no longer be supported.

Did you know that you can receive discounts on holidays, days out, airport parking and hotels? This includes companies such as TUI, Lastminute.com, Holiday Extras, Jet2holidays and more!

Find all the information on staff benefits at **www.rctstaffbenefits.co.uk**

OR Download the **Be saving** app:

- App store: **Be Saving on the App Store (apple.com)**
- Google Play store: **Be Saving – Apps on Google Play**

Register with your staff number
Scheme ID 7282

Use your personal email or work email to set up your account.

RCT Staff news



Vivup is our NEW CONFIDENTIAL Employee Assistance Programme available to all RCT staff



Whether you're facing problems at work or at home, you can access impartial, confidential advice from qualified counsellors for a range of different issues. This service is **FULLY CONFIDENTIAL** and no personal information goes back to the organisation.



Telephone Support: 0800 023 9387

Speak to a qualified counsellor or support specialist 24/7/365 days a year, discuss any emotional, personal, or work-related issues. Face to Face and virtual counselling is also available.



Debt and Financial advice Including "Ask Bill"



Downloadable self-help workbooks

Access and explore a wide range of self-help CBT workbooks that offer guidance and advice on several topics.

➤ vivup.yourcareapp.co.uk?CODE=109868



Podcasts and Blogs

Covering a range of mental health and wellbeing topics to gain a greater understanding with tips and advice on how to cope.

➤ vivup.yourcareapp.co.uk?CODE=109868

Bright Sky (Domestic Abuse Support)

A safe, easy to use app and website to support anyone who may be in an abusive relationship or those who are concerned about someone they know on how to respond.



Vivup provides free access to Your Care - an online platform enabling you to take control of your health and wellbeing.

Take online health assessments, discover your risk factors, create, and review health goals and create positive lifestyle habits.

➤ rhonddacouncil.yourcarewellbeing.net

Account will need to be created. Some services in the Your Care portal are NOT available.



If you are an ICT user you will find Vivup links on your desktop.

RCT Staff Facebook Group

Want to keep up with the latest staff information. Join the RCT Staff Facebook group. This is a closed group to only RCT staff and is a great way to keep up to date with staff news and we will be asking for your views and input through surveys etc.

Here's how to join:

1. Open Facebook and search "Rhondda Cynon Taf Council staff" on Facebook.
2. You will be asked to complete your full name, managers name and staff number.
3. You will be given access to the closed group once we have confirmed your information.

We ask that you treat this group with respect as it is subject to our policies and procedures.



Talk money week

Money Helper

Money Helper also have guides on:

- [How to talk to your partner about money](#)
- [How to talk to your friends about money](#)

Money Helper:

0800 138 7777

www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en/contact-us/money-guidance

As part of Talk Money Week our partners Salary Finance are running a live stream: 6 (easy to fix) mistakes holding you back with money expert Abigail Foster. This can be booked onto here: learn.salaryfinance.com/uk/the-cost-of-living-squeeze/a-salary-finance-livestream-6-easy-to-fix-mistakes-holding-you-back/

<https://www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en/family-and-care/talk-money/talking-to-your-partner-about-money>

<https://www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en/family-and-care/talk-money/talking-with-friends-about-money>

Having conversations about money can be difficult and can feel awkward. It can feel like a taboo subject, but it doesn't need to be. [Talk Money Week](#) gives opportunity to start building money conversations into every day life.

Talk money week takes place on 4th-8th November 2024 and this year's theme is encouraging people to 'do one thing' that could improve their financial wellbeing.

This could be as simple as checking your pension statement, talking to a child about money or utilising one of money helper's free tools or calculators: [Tools and calculators | MoneyHelper](#)

Research shows that one in three of us say that thinking about our financial situation causes us worry. This demonstrates that financial worry is a common issue and talking about it with family, friends or professionals can help to feel more confident in your financial situation, and less worried overall.

It is also encouraged to help children to build healthy relationships with money from an early age. Research demonstrates that nearly a third of parents and carers don't talk to their kids openly about money- missing an opportunity to support children with an early understanding of finances.

Check out these links full of tips and ideas on how to teach kids about money:

[How to teach kids about money | MoneyHelper](#)

[Talk Learn Do | MoneyHelper](#)

<https://www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en/family-and-care/talk-money/talk-money-week>

<https://www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en/tools-and-calculators>

<https://www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en/family-and-care/talk-money/how-to-talk-to-your-children-about-money>

<https://www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en/family-and-care/talk-money/talk-learn-do>



Christmas

It might feel a little early, but it's worth getting ahead. It can be a stressful time worrying about how much to spend on gifts, food, drinks and decorations.

We have put together some tips to help you to save money this Christmas.



Set a spending plan. Check what you can afford to spend and set a spending limit before you start your Christmas shopping. Make sure this includes everything- gifts, food, drink, travel, decorations and socialising if you are going out.



Try to be realistic. If you overspend on one thing, find somewhere else you can cut back your spending.



Make it yourself. There are many ways that you can make Christmas gifts which show you have put thought and effort into your gifts.



Discounts and Vouchers. Make sure to use any discounts and vouchers available to you, particularly through staff benefits- make sure to read the small print.



Pledge. You can pledge to do something nice for someone such as clean a friends' car, rather than buy an expensive gift.



If you are relying on credit, consider your best option. Credit cards are available which offer a 0% interest for short term borrowing- just make sure you remember to pay it off before the 0% interest period ends. Also take a look at the salary sacrifice options available to you through staff benefits such as technology schemes and loans through salary finance.

Remember that you do not need to spend large amounts of money in order to have an enjoyable Christmas - chances are that your best Christmas memories are about spending time with loved ones, not about the perfect gift or the most indulgent food.

Our partners, Salary Finance, have also put together some information on **'The art of saying no: Avoid overspending this festive season'**

<https://learn.salaryfinance.com/uk/the-cost-of-living-squeeze/the-art-of-saying-no-during-the-festive-season-how-to-avoid-overspending/>