

Happy New Year from Bristol Debt Advice Centre!

Improving your money management is one of the most positive changes you can make in 2012. So we suggest you make this your number one New Year's resolution! Doesn't sound too exciting we know but with the effects of the financial crisis and the ever increasing cost of living now is the perfect time to get organised. Remember that improving the way you manage your money can make all kinds of other options in the future become possible. Plus it's chilly outside, so stay in the warm and sort out your finances!



BDAC's Top 10 Money New Year Resolutions

If you want to manage your money effectively in 2012 there are five key areas to keep an eye on: Making Ends Meet, Planning Ahead, Keeping Track, Choosing Products and Staying Informed.

Our top 10 Money New Year resolutions are positive steps designed to help you stick with them:

- 1. Review your income and spending** - Work out your income and spending either monthly or weekly. You can do this by looking through bank statements, bills and receipts and categorising your spending into different groups. Work out annual or quarterly payments as monthly or weekly ones depending on how you do it. Give yourself an hour or more to do this and aim to have it done by the end of January 2012.
- 2. Maximise your income** - if you receive benefits make sure you're getting all that you're entitled to. Can you rent out a room or save money? (see tips 7, 8 and 9)
- 3. Make a realistic Budget** - Look at what you're spending your money on and how much. What can you cut back on? Make a budget for each area of spending and stick to it.
- 4. Spend on Essentials first** - Always make sure you pay your essentials like rent/mortgage, council tax, water, electricity, food and gas first. This will help you live within your means.
- 5. Maximise your savings** - If you have any disposable income think about setting some aside as savings. Compare savings accounts and options to see which ones have the best interest rate, open one up and set up a monthly direct debit from your current account.
- 6. Record your spending** - Start recording what you spend in a notebook and review at the end of each month by checking against your bank account (you'll be surprised at what you've spent money on and how much)
- 7. Save Money in easy ways** - improve your energy efficiency, look for deals in the supermarket, check the price of things before you buy, shop around.
- 8. Re-visit your gas and electricity supplier** - Do a switching exercise to find out if you could be saving money with another supplier. If you're computer literate, on-line tariffs are often the cheapest.
<http://bit.ly/compareenergysuppliers>

- 9. Re-visit your current packages** - Shop around for the best deals on you internet, TV, landline and mobile packages.
- 10. Avoid unnecessary debt** - taking out credit means you will pay more. If you can avoid it, do. Stick to your budget and save for bigger items where possible.

And...

11. Keep an eye on the financial news, tax rates change, as do benefits, it's helpful to know what's going on.

To help you fulfil our New Year resolutions, there's lots of further help on-line. We've listed some links below that will help you with budgeting, dealing with debt, give information about benefits, saving energy and choosing financial products.

Helpful links:

<http://www.bdac.org.uk/>
<http://www.creditaction.org.uk/>
<https://www.mymoneysteps.org>
<http://www.moneyadvice.service.org.uk/>
<http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/>
<http://www.turn2us.org.uk/>

Do a switching exercise:

<http://bit.ly/compareenergysuppliers>

By sticking to the tips above we hope you can weather the economic crisis through 2012. However if you're worried about debts that you're unable to repay or are struggling to pay for food, rent or utility bills please don't struggle alone.

Contact us on 0117 954 3990 to find out how we can help or visit our website for more details. We are a registered charity and all of our services are free.

<http://www.bdac.org.uk/>

