



Using the Money Advice and Budgeting Service

What is MABS?

The Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) is a free and confidential service for people with debt and money management problems. There are 62 MABS offices in Ireland with professional Money Advisers to:

- help you deal with your debts and make out a budget
- examine your income to make sure you are not missing out on any of your entitlements
- contact your creditors on your behalf with offers of payment if you are not able to do it yourself
- help you to decide on the best way to make the payments.

Why do people usually go to MABS?

People often seek our help for:

- there are extra bills to pay because something has happened, such as illness in the family, separation, bereavement or an accident
- there is no money left over to pay everyday bills

- the money coming into the household is less than it used to be and loan repayments have fallen behind
- they have been living on a low income for a long time and are getting further and further behind because of the cost of education, clothing and footwear, travel, childcare or rent
- they took out more loans than they are able to repay
- they go from welfare to work and find they haven't as much money as they thought they would have and need help with a new budget.

How do I make contact with you?

You can contact us directly yourself by phone, by letter or by calling in person.

If you don't feel able to make the call yourself, you could ask someone to help you. If you are in touch with another service, for example a Citizens' Information Centre, a Community Welfare Office, Social Welfare Office, District Nurse or St Vincent de Paul, you could ask them to contact MABS for you to make an appointment.

A counsellor, doctor or other professional could make the contact for you.

No one is allowed to make an appointment for you without your agreement.

A Money Adviser will usually see you in the MABS office. However, some advisers deal with a large area (especially outside of Dublin) and it might be difficult for you to go to the office. If this is so, you should say this when you make the appointment. Many offices will provide the service in another area on a part-time basis (called an Outreach Service) and all Money Advisers will meet you at another location to suit you. Where we provide this service you may have to wait a little longer for an appointment.

When you make contact with MABS, it is important that you tell us about anything very urgent, for example, if one or more of your creditors has taken legal action or your ESB or gas supply is to be disconnected. In cases like these, you may be able to get an emergency appointment.

How to use the Money Advice and Budgeting Service

Making your first appointment

When you make the first contact with us you will usually talk to the office administrator. He or she will take some of your details and make the appointment. At this stage, you should say if it is an emergency. If you feel very frightened by your situation, you should say this too. Some offices have a waiting list for appointments and may take people on a priority basis.

When you go for your first appointment bring:

- any letters you have received from your creditors or their solicitors (if you have been too frightened to open them, bring them closed to your Money Adviser who will help you)
- your credit union account book and any recent statements, if you have a credit union account
- your books from any account you might have with door-to-door salesmen or moneylenders

- any papers or statements of your rent, ESB, telephone or cable accounts
- bank statements and details of any other debts
- details of your income – your payslip if you are working or your Social Welfare payment book or receipt from the Post Office if you are unemployed
- any car finance or mortgage agreements signed by you.

If you don't have any of these papers available or if you forget any of them when you go for your appointment, don't worry – keep your appointment anyway. Your Money Adviser will ask you to send them afterwards or bring them with you to the next appointment. If you find it difficult to get this information, the Money Adviser will help you.

Don't be afraid to talk about all your debts. The Money Adviser will not be shocked by the number of debts you have, how much you owe or how you got into debt. They are only interested in how to help you.

How the service works with you

Your first appointment could take an hour or more, depending on your needs.

The Money Adviser will:

- examine your income and make sure you are getting everything you are entitled to and that you are liable for the debts
- help you work out how much you will need for your everyday needs and give you advice on budgeting
- help you to prepare a financial statement that will be used when negotiating with your creditors
- help you prioritise your debts (housing, heat, light and food are your main priorities) and help you decide on a payment plan
- negotiate with your creditors if you wish
- provide support while you deal with your debts
- make contact with and refer you to other services if you wish

How long the process takes

The number of appointments you have with us and the length of time you remain with the service will depend on your needs. The Money Adviser will encourage and support you while you make progress and begin to deal with your difficulties yourself, but there is no set time in which you are expected to do this.

This is a confidential service. The Money Adviser will not discuss your situation with anyone without your signed agreement.

The service will provide you with the information and support you need to make decisions, but no one will tell you what to do. Any decisions and choices about your debts and payments must be made by you.

Making payments to your creditors

We work with credit unions to provide a payment system for people who have budgeting problems. This is called a Special Account. This system is available in most but not all areas.

The Money Adviser will help you to examine your budget and work out how much you need to pay every week to keep up to date with your bills (even the ones that are not usually paid weekly).

The credit union will open an account for you (separate from your shares and loan account).

You then pay the agreed amount, which will cover all your bills, into the account on your payday.

At the end of every month, we will send an invoice to the credit union and your creditors will be paid by credit union cheque.

It is very important to remember that this system only works if the money is paid in regularly, as the credit union can only pay out the amount that you have lodged.

There are other methods of payment, which the Money Adviser will discuss with you, to enable you to decide which is the most appropriate for you.

Self help

If you prefer to deal with your situation yourself, we have a number of publications that may help. A range of information leaflets on specific debts and ways of dealing with debt are available on our website at www.mabs.ie and from any MABS office.

Disclaimer

Every effort has been made to ensure that the information contained in this leaflet is accurate, but the Department of Social and Family Affairs accepts no legal responsibility for any errors or omissions contained in it. If you have a specific legal query relating to matters raised in this leaflet you should get detailed legal advice.

Personal Budget Spreadsheet

Weekly Expenditure

Rent/Mortgage	€	<input type="text"/>	ESB	€	<input type="text"/>
Coal	€	<input type="text"/>	Gas/Oil	€	<input type="text"/>
Groceries	€	<input type="text"/>	Milk/Bread	€	<input type="text"/>
Toiletries/Cleaners etc.	€	<input type="text"/>	Phone(s)	€	<input type="text"/>
Clothes(s)	€	<input type="text"/>	Baby Goods	€	<input type="text"/>
School/Contributions	€	<input type="text"/>	School Books	€	<input type="text"/>
Donations/Raffles etc.	€	<input type="text"/>	Medical Expenses	€	<input type="text"/>
Chemist	€	<input type="text"/>	Papers	€	<input type="text"/>
Lotto	€	<input type="text"/>	Entertainment	€	<input type="text"/>
Cigarettes	€	<input type="text"/>	Hardware/Maintenance	€	<input type="text"/>
Household Goods	€	<input type="text"/>	TV Rental	€	<input type="text"/>
TV Licence	€	<input type="text"/>	Cablelink	€	<input type="text"/>
Videos	€	<input type="text"/>	Car Petrol/Diesel	€	<input type="text"/>
Car Insurance	€	<input type="text"/>	Car Tax	€	<input type="text"/>
Car Maintenance	€	<input type="text"/>	Car Repayments	€	<input type="text"/>
Transport Costs	€	<input type="text"/>	House Insurance	€	<input type="text"/>
Misc. Expenses (1)	€	<input type="text"/>	Other Insurance	€	<input type="text"/>
Misc. Expenses (2)	€	<input type="text"/>	Total Expenditure	€	<input type="text"/>

Weekly Income

Wages/Social Welfare	€	<input type="text"/>	Children's Allowance	€	<input type="text"/>
Part-time work (average)	€	<input type="text"/>	Other income	€	<input type="text"/>
	€	<input type="text"/>	Total Income	€	<input type="text"/>
	€	<input type="text"/>	Balance Available	€	<input type="text"/>

Loans/Arrears

Loan/Arrears 1	€	<input type="text"/>	Loan/Arrears 5	€	<input type="text"/>
Loan/Arrears 2	€	<input type="text"/>	Loan/Arrears 6	€	<input type="text"/>
Loan/Arrears 3	€	<input type="text"/>	Loan/Arrears 7	€	<input type="text"/>
Loan/Arrears 4	€	<input type="text"/>	Loan/Arrears 8	€	<input type="text"/>
			Total Loan/Arrears	€	<input type="text"/>



www.mabs.ie

*For free, confidential advice and assistance
contact your nearest:*

MABS Money Advice and Budgeting Service

The Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS)

This leaflet is prepared on behalf of the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS), a free, confidential and independent service for people with debt and money management problems.