

What is Financial Abuse?



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1. Introduction

This leaflet is designed to help people understand what financial abuse is, how to spot the signs of financial abuse, the impact it can have on people, and how to broach the subject of financial abuse with people who may be reluctant to talk about it or are unaware they are being abused. The final section covers who can provide help and support.



2. What is Financial Abuse

Financial abuse includes having money or other property stolen, being defrauded, being put under pressure in relation to money or other property and having money or other property misused.

Financial abuse might look like:

- Borrowing money and not giving it back
- Stealing money or belongings
- Taking pension payments or other benefit away from someone
- Taking money as payment for coming to visit or spending time together
- Forcing someone to sell their home or assets
- Tricking someone into bad investments
- Pressuring or even forcing someone to make changes in wills, property, or inheritance



3. Cost of Living Impact

The cost of things like food, gas, electricity, and fuel has been steadily rising for some time, and with wages and benefits not rising as quickly, many people are struggling to pay for the things they need.

With increasing numbers of people struggling through the cost-of-living crisis, illegal moneylenders appear to be targeting lower income workers, this could become a growing problem as more households struggle to access credit to help them manage life events and meet unexpected costs ([Fair4All Finance](#)).

[Action Fraud](#) have also identified that criminals are using the cost-of-living crisis to scam members of the public with phone calls, phishing emails, and text messages offering financial support with bills, if the person registers their details, their personal and financial information is then stolen.

The cost-of-living crisis also increases the cost of leaving if you live with an abuser and living on a single income. This may mean people are more reluctant to leave an abusive situation or might return to living with someone who has abused them because they cannot afford to live alone or as a single parent.



4. Signs of Financial Abuse

Here are some of the behaviours and signs that might suggest financial abuse is happening:

- Unexplained money loss
- Lack of money to pay for essentials such as rent, bills and food
- Inability to access or check bank accounts and bank balance
- Changes or deterioration in standards of living
- Unusual or inappropriate purchases in bank statements
- Isolation and withdrawal from friends and family
- A person not receiving their benefits
- Payment of a person's contribution towards services suddenly stops.
- Reluctance on the part of family, friends or the person controlling funds to pay for replacement clothes or furniture.
- Large volumes of 'junk' mail.
- Abrupt changes to or the sudden establishment of wills.

- Numerous unpaid bills, or overdue rent, when someone else is supposed to be managing the finances

This powerful video from Public Protection Kent is designed to help people to spot the signs of doorstep crime and financial abuse [Spot the Signs of Financial Abuse](#)



5. Who Might Carry Out Financial Abuse?

Financial abuse is most frequently carried out by a person acting in a trusted capacity. This includes family members, friends, neighbours, care workers and other professionals.

Family members and friends:

- May have a substance misuse or gambling problem, or financial difficulties.
- Are due to inherit money but feel justified in taking it before it is due.
- May have negative feelings towards other family members and want to prevent them from acquiring or inheriting the person's assets.
- Are acting with the person's consent but not in their best interest. Some families may have a view that the income of individual family members, including benefits for disabled people, should be pooled into the family income.

Professionals may:

- Overcharge for services or products.
- Use deceptive or unfair business practices.
- Seek employment, such as care workers or personal assistants, and then gain the person's trust and take over their finances unlawfully.
- Find people who are isolated or alone, or contact the recently bereaved, in order to financially abuse them.
- Move from community to community to avoid detection.

Financial abuse may also be carried out by individuals who are initially strangers and seek out vulnerable adults with the intention of exploiting them. This includes:

- Mass marketing fraud
- Identity theft
- Scams
- Rogue traders



6. It May Be Difficult to Spot Financial Abuse for a Variety of Reasons Including:

- The person may be reluctant to speak out through a sense of shame, or fear of repercussions, such as the family member withdrawing their support or getting into trouble.
- A belief that financial matters are private and raising concerns may seem like an intrusion.
- It may often start out as a legitimate transaction, but escalate over time, making it difficult to identify when it has tipped over into being abusive.
- It can be difficult to spot if a person is being threatened by others.
- People can be targeted because of perceived vulnerabilities such as dementia, learning disability or social isolation and may not know they are being financially abused.



7. How Does Financial Abuse Affect Someone?

A person may experience any of the following:

- Ashamed or embarrassed
- Isolated or trapped.
- Angry
- Worried about upsetting other family members.
- Self-blame
- Fear of losing relationships with other family members e.g., grandchildren
- That they would prefer to live with the abuser than alone.

- Unsure how to get help or who to talk to
- Loss of confidence.
- Worried that they don't want the person hurting them to get into trouble, they just want the abuse to stop.



8. The Link Between Financial Abuse and Domestic Abuse

Financial abuse can involve exerting control over another person by controlling their access to money. This is one of a range of controlling behaviours used by perpetrators of domestic abuse.

Whilst not an exhaustive list, controlling behaviours related to finances can include:

- Interfering with employment and / or education.
- Destroying property.
- Stopping or controlling access to finances including benefits, savings or wages.
- Forcing a person to take out credit.
- Forcing a person to commit fraud.
- Refusing to contribute to household or other costs.
- Prolonging legal proceedings.
- Stealing.



9. How to Start a Conversation About Financial Abuse

Financial abuse can be a sensitive topic to approach. Sometimes, it's inflicted on people by those closest to them, including family members, caregivers, or friends.

Ask questions that prompt conversation and help identify the abuse. For example:

- Have you ever felt pressured to lend money?
- Have you ever shared your personal banking information when you didn't feel comfortable to?
- Have you lent anyone money that they haven't yet paid back?
- Have you been pressured into changing your will, or power of attorney?
- Do you have any loans that you don't remember taking out?

Remember to be sensitive while asking questions, and to be aware that a person may not be willing to open up about these topics, especially if the situation involves family.



10. Tips and Advice to Keep Safe

The following tips are included in a guide to keeping safe from financial abuse produced by Hourglass. [Link to Hourglass guide](#)

- If other people do your shopping, keep an eye on receipts and what is spent.
- Only let people you trust have access to your accounts, money or any benefits or pensions.
- Beware of phone and internet scams, do not send money or information before confirming identities.
- If people you do not trust are coming to the door, remember you do not have to answer.
- Consider getting an intercom or peephole installed for safety.
- Always do your research when employing people for household jobs or repairs. Make sure you obtain a few quotes and use reputable companies. If someone is pressuring you, this may be a cause for concern. You are entitled to say “no” and close the door. If you are worried call 101, if they become aggressive or inappropriate call 999.
- Check your bank statements regularly.

- Ensure you choose secure passwords for online banking that only you know and if you need to write them down keep them in a safe place.
- Keep important documents and valuables safe and out of sight.
- Think about who you might want to make decisions on your behalf if you lose capacity to do so and consider giving someone you trust Power of Attorney.
- Always seek professional advice when considering Power of Attorney



11. Seeking Help and Support

If you are worried that you or someone you know is being abused financially there are places you can go for help.

Police

If you think a crime has been committed or someone is in immediate danger, call 101 or 999.

Adult Social Care

If the person being abused needs care and support (practical, financial and emotional support for people who need extra help to manage their lives) you can contact Solihull Adult Social Care on 0121 704 8007 or online here [report adult abuse](#) and share your concerns.

Citizens Advice

Information, advice, and support on lots of different topics, including debt, money matters, housing and benefits.

Call – 0800 144 8848

Online - www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Step Change

Free, confidential, and expert debt advice and money guidance. Provide recommendations for the best solution or service for your circumstances. Support you while you deal with your money worries for as long as you need.

Call – 0800 138 1111

Online - www.stepchange.org

Banks and Building Societies

Approaching your bank or building society about abuse can be daunting, but they could be an important source of information and support. If it is safe to do so, speaking to someone at your bank or building society can help you take steps to regain control of your money. They may also suggest ways of ensuring any new banking information is safe and secure to help prevent further abuse.

Banks play a vital role in supporting victim-survivors to regain control of their money and rebuild their lives. Surviving Economic Abuse have launched a Banking Support Directory, a one-stop shop where victim-survivors can see what support their bank offers and how to contact them. This may include de-linking a victim-survivor's finances from those of the abuser and suggesting ways of ensuring that the abuser cannot access banking information.

[Find the directory on their website at this link](#)

Shelter

A free information and advice service and helpline on housing and homelessness.

Call – 0808 800 444

Online - www.shelter.org.uk

Turn2us

A website with information on benefits, charity, local authority grants and support services.

Online - www.turn2us.org.uk

Age UK Solihull

A free advice and resource service for older people

Call – 0121 704 7840

Online - www.ageuk.org.uk/solihull

Solihull Community Advice Hubs

The Solihull Community Advice Hubs, delivered by Age UK Solihull, provide high quality information, advice and support to all residents (aged 18+) of Solihull. The Advice Hubs bring together a wide range of voluntary sector organisations to support with benefits, debt, health and social care, disability, keeping warm, direct payments, being a carer.

Online - [Age UK Solihull - Community Advice Hubs](#)

Birmingham & Solihull Women's Aid

Specially trained team of female workers provide emotional and practical support to women and children affected by domestic violence and abuse.

Call – 0808 800 0028

Online - www.bswaid.org

Galop – National LGBT+ Domestic Abuse Helpline

Emotional and practical support for LGBT+ people experiencing domestic, emotional, or financial abuse.

Call - 0800 999 5428

Email – help@galop.org.uk

Online - www.galop.org.uk

Solihull Mind

Mental health support. The Outreach service helps people with mental health problems to access the advice and local services they need. It can help with areas such as benefits, financial and debt advice, housing, accessing services including social work teams/mental health teams/GP/counselling, support for appointments, help in speaking to other organisations etc.

Call - 0121 742 4941 or 0121 743 4237

Online - www.solihullmind.org.uk

The National Domestic Violence Helpline

A freephone 24-hour helpline run in partnership by Refuge and Women's Aid. It is a national service for women experiencing domestic violence, their family, friends, colleagues, and others calling on their behalf.

Call - 0808 200 0247 (24 hours)

Online - www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk



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