Mental Health & Money Advice

Mental Health & Money Toolkit

Guide for Healthcare Professionals



About this toolkit

Change Mental Health, in partnership with the Scottish Government and the Money and Pensions Service, has produced the Scottish version of a resource to support people to manage both their mental health and money difficulties. This toolkit was originally developed by Mental Health and Money Advice, working with the National Academy for Social Prescribing and healthcare professsionals and people with mental health and money worries.

The toolkit approach was chosen as people with lived experience wanted an interactive, 'patient-held' record that they could work on collaboratively with their health and social care professional.



Key points to consider

- This toolkit can be embedded in initial consultations or appointments, to normalise conversations around mental health and money and ensure that people act at the earliest opportunity.
- This toolkit is a collaborative piece, to be completed in partnership by the person with mental health and money difficulties and you, the health or social care professional supporting them.
- This toolkit should guide conversations between health and social care professionals and the people using their services, and to link people in with their local voluntary sector provision.
- If a patient requires a digital version of the Mental Health and Money Advice Toolkit, they can download an interactive PDF for free here: **www.mhma.org.uk/toolkit**
- If you require further Mental Health and Money Advice Toolkits, visit: **www.mhma.org.uk/toolkit-health-professionals**

Mental Health & Money Toolkit: Section guide

My Situation *on page 5*

This page is an opportunity for people to summarise their situation, to avoid repeating themselves at multiple appointments. You should therefore encourage them to complete this page as comprehensively as possible, outlining clearly how their mental health and money management is affected, as well as including any diagnoses if they wish to do so.

Section 1: Mental health and money: Where to start *on page 7*

The first section of this toolkit provides an overview of how money worries can worsen mental health and how mental health difficulties can worsen money management. It illustrates this relationship in a 'vicious cycle' diagram. This section also highlights the role of avoidance and how, despite giving us short-term relief from our worries, it is more detrimental in the long-term.

Section 2: Getting ready to take action *on page 11*

From speaking with people who have previously experienced mental health and money difficulties, we learnt that getting into the right headspace to tackle money management is often the most challenging part, primarily due to feelings of guilt, shame and failure.

Therefore, this toolkit begins with confidence building and self-care techniques, so that people can understand that there is more to them than their money concerns.

The problem-solving activity in this section is crucial so people can break down their current situation into incremental steps, as well as finding practical solutions to these. This activity is significantly longer than the other two in this section. Therefore, it may be an excellent opportunity to work collaboratively with your patient in this section.

Section 3: Understanding your finances *on page 24*

This section aims to guide people in understanding their finances, by determining which outgoings are a priority and weighing this up with their incomings. It provides information about 'priority bills' and the activity seeks to identify which of the person's outgoings, including personal care and hygiene such as grocery shopping, prescriptions etc., are of the most importance.

The activity uses a tool to calculate someone's income and expenditure to create a budget. However, from engaging with experts-by-experience, we understand that the term 'budgeting' is stigmatising. We have avoided this term as much as possible. Language such as 'planning', 'calculating' or 'allocating' was preferred by people with lived experience.

Note: Although the equations can be calculated manually, there is a link for these calculations to be done by the online budget calculator tool here: **www.mhma.org.uk/tools/budget-planner/**
It is important to reiterate this point, as this section can seem overwhelming and daunting for people.

If after this activity, a person concludes that their outgoings are more than their income, then it is essential to encourage them to seek free debt advice. There is a section at the end of the toolkit that explains how people can access free, independent debt advice.



Remember:
You are not expected to give money or debt advice to the people you support. Debt advice is a regulated activity, and you must be authorised by the Financial Conduct Authority to give it. If you become aware that the person you're working with is in debt, support them to access free, independent debt advice.

You may have a referral or signposting relationship with a local organisation. We would encourage you to provide these details for the person to write in their toolkit and, in some instances, support them to make an appointment or an initial call. It may be useful to refer to the activities in Section 1 to make sure that they build their confidence ahead of their debt advice appointment.

Section 4: Navigating the benefit system *on page 37*

To increase their income, many people will have to go through the process of applying for benefits. From engaging with experts-by-experience, we know that this process is often extremely stressful and anxiety-inducing.

The system can also be quite complicated. This section aims to simplify the process by listing what they may need ahead of making their application, as well as signposting to more comprehensive guides that are on our website: **www.mhma.org.uk/welfare-benefits/social-security-scotland-benefits/**

This section also includes a breathing technique to allow people to manage the physical symptoms of anxiety. This may be useful as they prepare to apply for benefits, so they avoid the build-up of stress. This technique can be something that the person works through in their own time, or if you are comfortable and experienced in doing so, you can lead the exercise.

Section 5: Support *on page 43*

This section is for people to identify family members, friends, or carers who they wish to be involved with their money management and mental health care.

Although people may feel uncomfortable to do this, emphasise that a 'problem shared is a problem halved' and that by reaching out for support they can help to relieve some of the burden felt by experiencing mental health and money worries alone.

Furthermore, due to the high risk of mental health crises and suicidal ideation associated with money worries, people must have an abridged version of their crisis plan within this resource.

Section 6: Signposting and appointment planner *on page 47*

Finally, this section should be used to link the person with the local voluntary sector support provision in their community. As well as appointments to help with practical steps regarding money management – such as debt advisors – people should also be signposted to health and wellbeing activities to promote self-care and positive mental health.

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www.mhma.org.uk



Questions or help with the toolkit

If you would like to speak to someone about this toolkit in more detail or have any questions, please contact: **charlene.marks@mentalhealth-uk.org**

Further Resources

There may be certain circumstances where you are working with someone and are concerned about financial abuse, or the person is struggling with gambling and debt. If so, you may find the resources below from the Money Advice Service to be useful:

Remember
If you do suspect any form of abuse is taking place, follow your local safeguarding policies and procedures.

Tackling problem gambling and debt:

Tackling problem gambling and debt (moneyhelper.org.uk)

Protecting against financial abuse:

Protecting yourself against financial abuse (moneyhelper.org.uk)

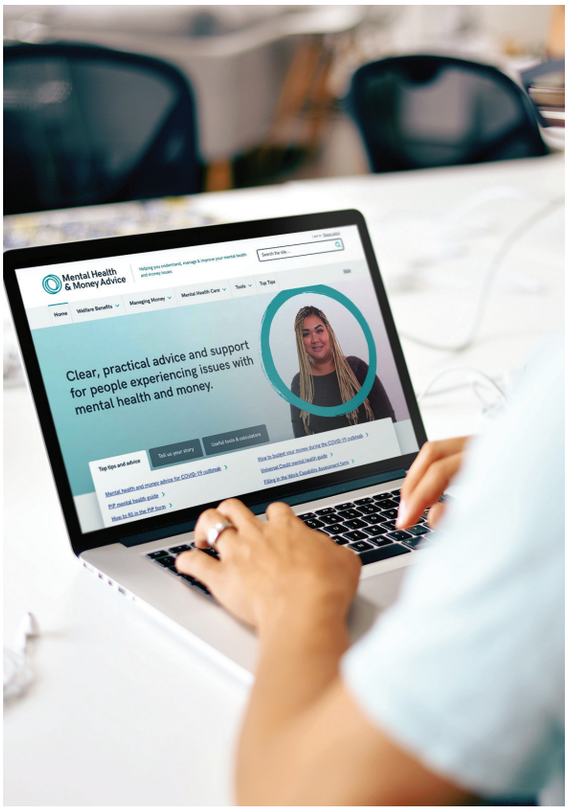
About Mental Health and Money Advice

Mental Health & Money Advice is the first UK-wide service to combine support for both mental health and financial problems.

We are here for people with a mental illness who are struggling with their money, as well as anyone whose financial problems are affecting their mental health.

We do this through our website, www.mhma.org.uk, which provides free and impartial information, support, and advice for anyone affected by mental health and money issues. It includes support for friends, families, carers and professionals working in the area.

We also offer a referral-only telephone-based advice and casework service for people with mental health and money problems. If you are interested in starting a referral relationship with us, please contact charlene.marks@mentalhealth-uk.org



Feedback

We would love to hear your feedback on the Mental Health & Money Toolkit. If you have any comments, suggestions and in particular case studies where you have used the toolkit with someone you are supporting, and it has had a positive effect, please let us know. You can email your feedback to charlene.marks@mentalhealth-uk.org

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