

Worrying About Money?

Follow these steps to find available financial advice and support in West Lothian



Step 1: What's the Problem?

I suddenly have no money

- Lost job/reduced hours
- Lost money/unexpected expense
- Disaster (e.g. flood or fire)
- Relationship breakdown
- Money stopped (e.g. failed a medical)
- Sanctioned - see option 5

See options **1 2 5 6**

I am waiting on a benefit payment/decision

- Made a new claim for benefit
- Benefit payment is delayed
- Waiting for a benefit decision

See options **1 4**

My money doesn't stretch far enough

- Deciding between food/fuel/mobile credit
- Low income or zero hours contract
- Statutory Sick Pay too low to cover costs
- Not sure if eligible for support
- Change of circumstance (e.g. new baby/bereavement/illness/left partner)

See options **1 2**

I have debt

- Rent or Council Tax arrears
- Gas or electricity
- Credit or store cards
- Personal loans and overdrafts
- Owe friends and family
- Benefit repayments

See option **3**

Step 2: What are some options?

1 Scottish Welfare Fund

People on low incomes may be able to get a **crisis grant** from the Council.

This is a payment to help you cope during an emergency or disaster, or due to unexpected expenses.

Crisis grants do not have to be paid back (not a loan).

2 Maximise Your Income

Anyone who is struggling financially can get a benefit check and speak to an advisor for free and confidential advice.

A **benefit check** can ensure that you are receiving all the money you're entitled to, especially if your circumstances have changed recently.

Speaking to an advisor could also help you **with managing gas and electricity bills** and **make sure you're not missing out** on things like school clothing grants or free school meals.

3 Debt Advice

Debt can happen to anyone. Free advice and support can help you find ways to manage your debts and reduce how much you pay each month.

4 Benefit Advance

If you have made a new Universal Credit benefit claim and are in financial hardship while you wait for your first payment, you may be able to get an advance to afford things like rent or food.

It's important to get advice before taking out an advance. Benefit advances must be paid back, and the money will be taken from your future benefit payments (a loan).

5 Hardship Payment

If you have been sanctioned, you may be able to request a hardship payment from the Jobcentre. Hardship payments are not always paid immediately, and they're not available to everyone.

Hardship payments of Universal Credit need to be paid back (a loan), but hardship payments of Jobseeker's Allowance or Employment Support Allowance do not (not a loan).

6 Challenge a Decision

You can challenge a benefit decision if your benefit has been stopped / sanctioned / reduced / refused or you have been overpaid.

Most benefit decisions need to be challenged within one month.

Step 3: Where can I get help?

Each of these services offer free and confidential advice

West Lothian Council Advice Shop

Information, advice and advocacy on benefits, debt, energy and housing

01506 283 000
advice.shop@westlothian.gov.uk
www.westlothian.gov.uk/advice-shop

Help with options: **1 2 3 4 5 6**

West Lothian Citizens Advice Bureau

Holistic advice service including benefits, debt, employment, consumer, and help with Universal Credit claims

01506 432 977
www.cabwestlothian.org.uk/get-advice

Help with options: **1 2 3 4 5 6**

Education and Maintenance Allowance

EMA is an allowance of £30 per week, depending on household income the payment is to help students with the cost of further education

www.westlothian.gov.uk/ema

Free School Meals and Clothing Grant

Families on low incomes may be eligible to receive free school meals and milk for their children as well as grants towards the cost of school clothing

www.westlothian.gov.uk/mealsandclothing

Other Support

Cost of Living Hub West Lothian
Signposting to support
www.westlothian.gov.uk/costofliving

Scottish Welfare Fund
Crisis grant
01506 280 000
www.westlothian.gov.uk/scottish-welfare-fund

Social Security Scotland
Benefit support
0800 182 2222
mygov.scot/benefits

Home Energy Scotland
Energy efficiency advice
0808 808 2282
www.homeenergyscotland.org

Breathing Space
Mental health support
0800 838 587
www.breathingspace.scot

Shelter
Housing advice
0808 800 4444
scotland.shelter.org.uk