

issue 01

# COST OF LIVING SUPPORT

staff newsletter



## Welcome to the first edition of Cost of Living Support.

From the cost of energy, fuel to the weekly shop, the cost-of-living increases is making every aspect of our lives more expensive. This affects every level of our workforce and as a result, many households are faced with challenging times.

RCT Council are committed to supporting its staff and its communities.

This newsletter is designed to highlight the current issues and identify support available to help us through the challenges we face.

*“One in ten people find it a constant struggle to keep up with bills and credit commitments”*

*“The average annual grocery shop is continuing to rise”*

### Cost-of-living crisis: a snapshot



Households are struggling with energy bills as they continue to rise.



One in ten people find it a constant struggle to keep up with bills and credit commitments.



Inflation has reached a 40 year high.



The consumer Price Index, which includes owner occupiers' housing is rising.



The average annual grocery shop is continuing to rise.

Watch out for our next issue of **Cost of Living Support** ...where we can provide more information.

Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg | This document is also available in Welsh



# save £££ with staff benefits

## Staff Benefits Website:

Find all the information on staff benefits at [www.rctstaffbenefits.co.uk](http://www.rctstaffbenefits.co.uk)

Register with your staff number

**Scheme ID 7282**

Use your personal email or work email to set up your account.

There are several ways to save £££ on eating out, gift cards, shopping, holidays, utilities etc. using our council Staff Benefits scheme. There are no credit checks only eligibility checks.

### vectis:card™ **The Vectiscard**

Download from google play or app store

**Scheme ID 7282**

Search the app for all retailers offering discounts in your area.



### **Salary Sacrifice Schemes**

Your Car Benefit Scheme from Tusker is the smarter way to run a car. A fixed monthly amount is taken directly from your gross salary and in return, you get the use of a brand-new car - Tusker sort everything out at no extra cost.



**Salary Finance Scheme** is an employee benefit that could help you worry about money less. Staff can access:

Loans at affordable rates repaid through your salary - you could pay off a more expensive loan, credit cards etc.

Try the salary finance website for more money insights such as videos or the budgeting tool.



### **The technology and smartphone scheme**

from Let's Connect allows staff to spread the cost over 36 months (technology) or 24 months (smartphones). With NI savings and no upfront costs, credit checks or deposits.



### **Other staff benefits include:**

- Purchase of annual leave
- Leisure for Life Corporate Membership
- Savings and affordable loans with Dragon
- Savers Credit Union.

# lets talk about money with care first

**Care first** is our NEW employee assistance programme where you can access a number of different supports. Visit and log in to:

**[www.carefirst-lifestyle.co.uk](http://www.carefirst-lifestyle.co.uk)**

Username: **rctc001**

Password: **employee**

## Did you know?

Payroll will be making a one off £125 Cost of living payment in October Pay for those staff GR1 to GR6 including minimum wages grades.

There will also be another family payment of £75 in October for all RCT Residents that have 1 child of school compulsory age.

### **Advice and information specialists**

Speak to expert advisors, trained by Citizen's advice on a range of topics such as financial, cost of living or debt issues, consumer rights e.g., bought a holiday and its been cancelled, renting problems etc.

Available Monday-Friday 8am to 10pm and weekends 9am-5pm. Call: **0800 174 319**

### **Care first website**

Access a range of information on managing your finances - try out the budget calculator, health issues, nutrition, fitness, giving up smoking etc.

**Webinars** book your place on webinars for saving household bills and many more. Missed the webinar? Some are recorded and can be replayed.

# planning for your future

- Do you know how to protect savings from future tax?
- How to utilise workplace benefits to make your money go further?
- Or even how small financial changes could potentially reduce your mortgage by years?

With this in mind, financial education specialists 'Affinity Connect' would like to invite you to attend a 1 hour 30 minute interactive online course around the key aspects of financial planning.

The course is designed to help employees identify the key financial issues that can arise during their working life and assist them with making key decisions.

**Aimed at:**  
**Employees wishing to take control of their finances.**

This course will give you information about how to maximise the value of both your take home pay and workplace benefits.

During the course you'll learn how to:

- Manage different types of debt
- Save and invest with confidence
- Budget like a pro
- Take steps to financial freedom

**More information is on RCT Source**  
<https://rct.learningpool.com/course/view.php?id=1980>

To book, email the [source@rctcbc.gov.uk](mailto:source@rctcbc.gov.uk)  
If you dont have ICT access call: **01443 570040**



Within the UK there is **£15 billion in unclaimed benefits**, are you one of those who may be entitled to support? Don't assume check it out, visit **[www.entitledto.co.uk](http://www.entitledto.co.uk)** its quick and easy to do, have your payslip and household bills information ready.


# look after your wellbeing with care first

**Care first** is our NEW employee assistance programme where you can access a number of different supports. Visit and log in to:

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Username: **rctc001**

Password: **employee**



Keeping on top of the cost-of-living increases can be challenging and may affect our mental wellbeing. The key is to talk about your feelings, others are going through the same thing.

Support is available through **Care first**  
Call: **0800 174 319**  
Open 24 hours a day  
7 days a week to speak to a trained counsellor for in the moment support.

**Phone Counselling:** Speak to a trained counsellor for in the moment support. Discuss anything that is troubling you, whether its personal difficulties such as relationships, financial worries, family matters, loss or bereavement, or work-related issues such as workload, relationships, and changes at work etc. If appropriate the counsellor may refer you for a course of telephone counselling.

**Call: 0800 174 319. (Open 24hrs / 7 days)**

**Online Counselling:** If you prefer to chat to a qualified counsellor online this can be accessed by visiting: **[www.carefirst-lifestyle.co.uk](http://www.carefirst-lifestyle.co.uk)** and logging in with the username and password above.

**Care First Website:** A range of information on managing your finances - try out the budget calculator, health issues, nutrition, fitness, giving up smoking etc.

**Webinars:** book your place on webinars.

**Manager Support:** The website has a dedicated area that provides support and guidance to managers who may be dealing with conflict or having difficult conversations etc. Visit: **[www.carefirst-lifestyle.co.uk](http://www.carefirst-lifestyle.co.uk)** and log in with the username and password above.



# our unions are here to help you

Our Union Partners can also provide a range of support for staff, contact your union for further advice and information.

We have all seen our energy bills increase and watched inflation rise, the cost of these increases will be felt from many directions. Fuel, food, taxes and rent to name but a few.

Your unions are here to help you with support and advice.



**GMB Wales**

[www.gmb.org.uk/region/walesandsouthwest](http://www.gmb.org.uk/region/walesandsouthwest)



**NEU**

[neu.org.uk/neu-cymru](http://neu.org.uk/neu-cymru)



**Unite**

[www.unitetheunion.org/what-we-do/unite-in-your-region/wales/](http://www.unitetheunion.org/what-we-do/unite-in-your-region/wales/)



**Unison**

[cymru-wales.unison.org.uk/](http://cymru-wales.unison.org.uk/)

**INFORM:** has a page for staff wellbeing that has all the information on Cost of living support.

For more information on external and community support visit the RCT website [www.rctcbc.gov.uk](http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk)

**Visit RCT Source:** We will be running a number of events for cost of living support please check RCT Source.

<https://rct.learningpool.com/course/view.php?id=2149>



# managing your bills with **G.U.I.D.E** by Salary Finance Limited

Everyone is trying to reduce their household bills but sometimes there is so much information on what can we do? this section looks at a number of suggestions for managing your bills that you might want to give a go or share the information with those you care and love.

Your

## **G.U.I.D.E**

### To coping with the cost of living squeeze



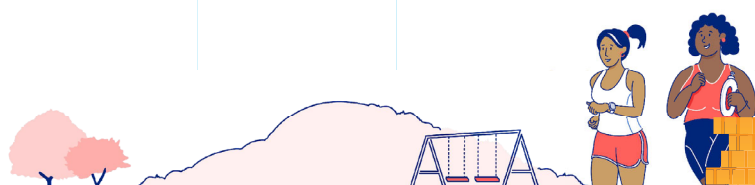
#### **Please note:**

This information is generic in nature and is **not personal advice**.

If you need personal financial advice, please consult a regulated independent financial adviser.

You can also get **free personal money help** from either:

[Money Helper Service](#) or your local [Citizens Advice Bureau](#)



For more financial insights and ideas visit:  
[www.salaryfinance.com/uk/my-salary-finance](http://www.salaryfinance.com/uk/my-salary-finance)

We know that times are tough.

Rising prices are putting a squeeze on household finances.

In this short guide we show what you can do to save money on:

**G**roceries

**U**tilities

**I**nsurance

**D**ebt

**E**nergy



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Groceries Utilities Insurance Debt Energy

## Groceries

Food is one of the biggest household expenses, with the average family spending over £3,300 each year\*, but there may be tasty savings to be had.



### Do you qualify for any discounts?

Depending on the benefits available to you at your employer, you may qualify for some discounts or deals through a benefit platform or partnerships your employer has in place. If you're not sure what you qualify for or what's on offer, check your company intranet or benefit platform.



### Own brands

Picking 'own label' and generic medicines instead of well-known brands can usually yield savings.



### Batch cook and freeze

Batch cooking and freezing leftovers can save you money, time and energy, while creating tasty and nutritious meals. Not only can this save you money but it'll also stop you from throwing things away



### Less but often

Food wasted is money wasted. Consider buying perishable food in smaller quantities, more often.



### Buy in bulk

Buy long lasting staples like rice and pasta in larger quantities, and stock up on store cupboard essentials. Always do the calculations to see how much things cost as the smaller - more convenient sized packs can sometimes be more expensive.



### Food banks

If you are struggling to afford food get a referral from your council, GP, health visitor or local Citizens Advice Bureau



### Food apps

Consider food apps to buy food at a much lower price from a range of retailers, cafes and restaurants whilst also saving it from going to waste.



### Coupons and cashback sites

Take advantage of coupon and cashback sites to help cut the price of your weekly shop, takeaways and eating out.



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\* Source: Money Helper (June 2021)

<https://www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en/blog/supermarket-savings/how-does-your-household-food-spend-compare>



For more financial insights and ideas visit:  
[www.salaryfinance.com/uk/my-salary-finance](http://www.salaryfinance.com/uk/my-salary-finance)

Groceries **Utilities** Insurance Debt Energy

## Utilities

There are savings and financial support available for some essential household costs.



### Mobiles - Sim only

Buying your phone outright (a reconditioned one is better for the planet) with a low cost sim-only data plan is a lot cheaper than all inclusive 'free' handset deals. Check out deals [here](#).



### Water - social tariff

If you receive Universal Credit or Tax Credits you can qualify for [discounted water rates](#).



### Broadband - social tariff or negotiate

If you receive Universal Credit or Tax Credits you could qualify for discounted broadband. Failing that, negotiate with your existing provider and if they won't play ball, move to a [better deal](#).



### Council tax

Depending on your circumstances, you could benefit from paying less council tax, or maybe even no council tax. [Check out the reduction scheme to see if you could get a 25 - 100% discount here](#)



### Rent

If you are claiming housing benefit or the housing component of Universal Credit, and your benefits don't meet your rent in full, you might qualify for additional rent support. [Read more about Discretionary Housing Payment \(DHP\) here](#)



### Household Support Fund (HSF)

Financial help can be awarded by your local authority based on criteria they set. Your eligibility isn't related to your income or savings. HSF payments can go towards replacement appliances, warm clothes, and food. Contact your [local council](#) to find out more about the fund's criteria and apply.



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Groceries Utilities **Insurance** Debt Energy

## Insurance

Insurance can be expensive and occasionally feels like a nice to have - but it's not. Make sure you're protecting your most valuable assets and getting the best deal.

The most common household-related insurance include:



Vehicle — Home — Holiday — Life — Income

There are savings to be had on insurance premiums.

At renewal, don't be afraid to ask your provider for a **more competitive quote**



**Price comparison websites** (PCWs) allow you to compare your renewal price with alternatives. This [article](#) lists the main PCWs.



Paying monthly usually costs between 10-15% more than paying annually, so ideally you should try to save each month to build up enough to meet the annual premium. This [article](#) from Which? summarises the key insurance money saving tactics for motor and home insurance.



All information included in this GUIDE is correct as of June 2022. Important: This is an option, not a recommendation. Your employer does not benefit from offering this service and all your communications will be with Salary Finance. Loan applications will be assessed to ensure the loan is appropriate and affordable for you. "Learn" content is for guidance and educational purposes only and is generic in nature. Salary Finance does not offer regulated financial advice. Please seek independent financial advice. © 2022 Salary Finance Limited. All rights reserved. Salary Finance Limited and Salary Finance Loans Limited are authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (firm reference numbers: 758053 and 734585). For loan products Salary Finance Limited acts either as lender or credit broker exclusively for associated company Salary Finance Loans Limited. Salary Finance Limited is registered as a small payment institution money remittance firm (firm reference number: 788485). Salary Finance Limited and Salary Finance Loans Limited are registered in England & Wales (company numbers: 09677777 and 07643748) at Scale Space, 58 Wood Lane, London, W12 7RZ. Data Protection Registrations: ZA152606 and ZA099501.

Groceries Utilities Insurance **Debt** Energy

## Debt

Debt repayments are a drain on your finances. Lowering repayments through lower interest charges can help you reduce outgoings and get out of debt faster.



### Snowball method

If you've struggled to repay unsecured debt, then the Snowball method could help you stay motivated. It means paying the smallest debt first, and once that's done, putting what you were paying on that one towards the next largest debt. And so on until all your debts are paid off!



### 0% Card balance transfer

If you borrow on a 0% interest credit card, avoid nasty surprises and high interest rate charges by making a note of when the 0% rate ends and calculating how much you need to repay each month to repay the debt in full by that date.



### Remortgage

The rise in property values over the past few years means your mortgage might be a lower proportion of your property value, and so qualify you for a better deal. Check out current best buys [here](#).



### Debt consolidation

If you have high cost debt and want to explore consolidating, Salary Finance may be able to help you save money by paying off more expensive debt at a lower rate.

Visit: <https://www.salaryfinance.com/uk/my-salary-finance> to find out more.



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Free debt advice is also available from your **local Citizens Advice Bureau** or other debt advice charities.

Find what's available to you locally [here](#).

Groceries Utilities Insurance Debt **Energy**

## Energy

Usually, you can look at changing energy providers to get a better deal. But at the moment, that's unlikely to make a big difference. But there are schemes that can help.



### Speak to your supplier

If you're struggling to pay or think you may struggle, always speak to your provider. They may be able to provide some hardship support. If you're worried, speak to them before you fall behind on payments



### £150 warm home discount

This will be credited to qualifying households' energy accounts in late 2022 automatically.



### Council Tax Energy Rebate (£150)

This applies to homes in bands A-D as at 1st April 2022 and those in the existing council tax reduction scheme in Wales and Scotland. There is additional help from councils for low-income households in bands E-G who don't otherwise qualify.



### Energy Support Scheme

Energy suppliers will automatically apply a £400 government grant (i.e. non repayable) credit to all residential customers' energy bills over 6 months from October 2022.



### The Household Support Fund

This is funding to support those most in need with the rising living costs. It can include help towards energy costs, subject to your local council's criteria. Contact your [local council](#) to find out more about the fund's criteria and apply.



### Energy Grants

Financial help is available to clear energy debts



### ECO4

Ask your energy provider what free or subsidised home energy improvements are available through this scheme.



### Energy Saving Trust

In some cases, the best thing to do is to reduce energy consumption. Find practical suggestions [here](#), energy



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