

# Debt Journeys and Proactive Service Response

Citizens Advice Tameside

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# Executive Summary

- **17.6% of adults in Tameside** are over-indebted.
- Tameside has the **7th highest rate** of individual insolvencies in England and Wales.
- Tameside has **the highest rate** of individual insolvencies in Greater Manchester.
- Residents of Tameside are becoming insolvent at nearly **twice the national average**.
- People experiencing debt are **more likely** to experience a mental health problem than the national average.
- Tameside has one of the **lowest Good Credit Index Scores**, coming **276** out of **307** local authorities in England, indicating poor financial health in the borough.
- People in Tameside are more likely to seek debt advice once enforcement action has begun, indicating a need for earlier intervention.

To understand local debt journeys we explored existing resident survey data, and development of a tailored survey of lived experience of the debt journey, to identify barriers that people face in seeking advice, and how services can be more proactive and intervene earlier. We consider the research findings alongside local service statistics and mapping.

## Key Findings

Exploration of existing resident survey data highlighted themes of cost of living impact, pressures on incomes, experience of and perceptions of accessing support and dealing with debts through family and friends or yourself, awareness of advice services, stigma of accessing advice services, themes of alternative borrowing or unregulated lending to deal with debt, individuals concern of the impact of debt on credit ratings.

Feedback from residents from the Dealing with Debt survey offers initial themes for proactive service responses to addressing barriers to accessing debt advice and support services which are included in the recommendations.

# Recommendations

The following recommendations are made:

<b>Continuation of Dealing with Debt survey</b>	To capture more robust data, increased feedback of lived experience from Tameside residents ongoing.
<b>Increase awareness of debt advice services</b>	<p>Current feedback suggests a publicity campaign advertising free help and advice, along with information about how debt advice services can help residents locally - what to expect when a resident makes contact, what can services do? How can services help?</p> <p>Campaign elements recommended:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Where to turn for advice, what information and advice can be offered, how?, when?, where? to access debt advice services in Tameside.</li> <li>2. Impacts of advice and benefits of seeking advice early in the problem, before enforcement or other priority actions.</li> <li>3. Stigma of experiencing financial difficulties, and of seeking help for them.</li> </ol>
<b>Multi-channel access to debt advice services</b>	Current feedback suggests a blended approach to debt advice and information service delivery - Range of channels including face to face, telephone, video calls, and easy to follow, accessible online information.
<b>Increased debt advice service provision</b>	Current feedback suggests increasing capacity of debt information and advice service provision, expanding service provision to ease local access. Exploration of triggers of peaks in service demand, seasonal and otherwise, and early intervention referral protocols.
<b>Review of local financial capability/ education provision</b>	<p>Recommended financial education content:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. debt and borrowing - unregulated lenders, high risk lending, unaffordable lending, loan sharks</li> <li>2. credit, credit scores, financial hardship</li> <li>3. income maximisation</li> <li>4. dealing with debt</li> </ol>

## Background

Tameside Poverty Needs Assessment highlighted key local debt data:

- **17.6% of adults in Tameside** are over-indebted.
- Tameside has the **7th highest rate** of individual insolvencies in England and Wales.
- Tameside has **the highest rate** of individual insolvencies in Greater Manchester.
- Residents of Tameside are becoming insolvent at nearly **twice the national average**.
- People experiencing debt are **more likely** to experience a mental health problem than the national average.
- Tameside has one of the **lowest Good Credit Index Scores**, coming **276** out of **307** local authorities in England, indicating poor financial health in the borough.
- People in Tameside are more likely to seek debt advice once enforcement action has begun, indicating a need for earlier intervention.

<https://www.tameside.gov.uk/TamesideMBC/media/Environmental-Health/Poverty-Needs-Assessment-Final.pdf>

Tameside Inequalities Reference Group sought to research 'Debt Patterns/ Journeys and Proactive Service Response' and invited Citizens Advice Tameside to undertake local research to look in detail at the issue of why Tameside residents hold relatively high levels of debt, have high rates of insolvency and low credit scores, to identify some preventative solutions.

Citizens Advice Tameside is a local advice charity, established in 1966, delivering generalist and specialist advice services from 16 locations across Tameside by face to face, telephone and digital channels. Citizens Advice Tameside holds the Advice Quality Standard for Debt Casework, and is Financial Conduct Authority registered. In the preceding 12 months (November 2022 to October 2023), Citizens Advice Tameside has advised **5,796 individuals**, on **7,829 cases**, and **21,491** advice issues.

To address gaps in knowledge and service coverage, Citizens Advice Tameside were asked to investigate the following avenues:

- People's journeys of falling into debt
- How services can be more proactive and intervene earlier in people's debt journeys
- The barriers that people face in seeking debt advice

Through exploration of existing resident survey data, and development of a tailored survey, Citizens Advice Tameside sought to research lived experience of the local debt journey, to identify barriers that people face in seeking advice, and how services can be more proactive and intervene earlier. We consider the research findings alongside local service statistics and service mapping.

## Tameside Poverty Needs Assessment

Tameside Poverty Needs Assessment gives key local data points:

- Percentage of jobs paid below National Minimum Wage / National Living Wage rates for workers aged 16+ (2021) - **Tameside 9.7%, England 5.9%**
- Income Deprivation affecting older people (2019) - **Tameside 17.7%, England 14.2%**
- Percentage of children living in relative low income (2021) - **Tameside 22.3%, UK 18.7%**
- Economic Inactivity Rate - **Tameside 23.5%, England 21.2%**
- Percentage of children living in absolute low income families - **Tameside 17.6%, UK 15.60%**
- Income Deprivation - **Tameside 17.5%, England 11.6%**
- Percentage of jobs paid below living wage in 2021 - **Tameside 28.5%, Greater Manchester (GM) 20.75%**
- Percentage of fuel poor households by administrative area 2020 - **Tameside 14.1%, England 13.2%**
- Median Gross Annual Pay 2021 (workplace) - **Tameside £25,852, GM £28,174, England £31,480**
- Proportion of households struggling with food insecurity - **Tameside 15.07%, GM average 11.13%**

<https://www.tameside.gov.uk/TamesideMBC/media/Environmental-Health/Poverty-Needs-Assessment-Final.pdf>

## Greater Manchester Residents survey wave 6 - April 2023 - Tameside:

[https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/media/7771/20230509\\_gm-residents-survey\\_report6\\_final.pdf](https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/media/7771/20230509_gm-residents-survey_report6_final.pdf)

## Cost of Living:

- **77%** of respondents in Tameside are 'very' or 'somewhat' worried about the rising cost of living, in line with the GM average **(76%)**
- **8 in 10 (80%)** Tameside respondents say that their cost of living has increased, the same as the GM average **(80%)**
- **44%** of respondents in Tameside do not think that they will be able to save any money in the next 12 months, compared to the GM average **(45%)**
- **Over half** of respondents in Tameside say that it is hard to afford their energy costs **(56%)**, the same as the GM average **(56%)**, with over **2 in 5 (44%)** saying that it is difficult to afford their rent or mortgage costs, again in line with the GM average **(43%)**

## Food security:

- **Two thirds (67%)** of respondents in Tameside with children live in a food insecure household, significantly higher than the GM average **(54%)**
- **35%** of respondents in Tameside say that someone in their household has cut the size of or skipped meals because there wasn't enough money for food, in line with the GM average **(33%)**
- **A quarter (23%)** of respondents in Tameside have had someone in their household lose weight because there wasn't enough money for food, similar to the GM average **(22%)**
- **19%** of respondents in Tameside say someone in their household hasn't eaten for a whole day due to lack of money for food, in line with the GM average **(20%)**



## Tameside - Debt Support and Services report - Quarterly Insights wave v4:

**1,172** interviews were carried out between September 2022 and November 2022 with a representative sample of Tameside residents.

Based on the 60-second debt test\* Approximately **two in ten** Tameside residents surveyed may need help with their debts. A further **one in ten** “should act now to avoid problems later”, while for roughly **three quarters** “things are looking pretty good”.

*\*60-second Debt Test created by the Step Change Debt Charity and based on responses to the 5 statements:*

No to all statements - Things are looking pretty good

Yes to 1 statement - You should act now to avoid bigger problems later

Yes to 2-3 statements - It looks like you need help with your debts

Yes to 4-5 statements - You need help with your debts

- **Over half** of respondents would not consider themselves to be struggling financially.
- Respondents aged 35-54 are more likely to consider themselves to be struggling financially (16-34 years old, **12%**; 35-54 years old, **20%**; 55+ years old, **10%**).
- Families are more likely to consider themselves to be struggling financially (**18%**) than those without children (**12%**).
- Respondents earning less than £30,000 per year are more likely to be struggling financially (**31%**) than those earning between £30,000 and £50,000 (**8%**) and more than £50,000 per year (**1%**).
- Those who are unemployed and disabled say they are struggling the most financially.
- **Half of respondents** agree they know where to access support, but **6 in 10** would deal with debts themselves.
- Respondents are more comfortable with talking to a friend or family member if they were struggling with debts than they would be with seeking advice from an organisation like Tameside Council or debt advice organisations.
- The majority of respondents have never sought debt related advice or support.

- Respondents are most aware of Tameside Citizens Advice Bureau (**72%**) and government or consumer websites (**63%**).
- Despite awareness not being the highest among respondents, the most common form of advice or support accessed by respondents is getting information from their friends and family.
- One-quarter of respondents feel they would struggle financially if their monthly outgoings rose by £99 or less. Approximately **4 in 10** state they would likely seek advice or support if their monthly outgoings rose.
- Of those who would not seek advice or support, **2 in 10** respondents would deal with any debt issues themselves.
- **One in ten** would consider or have used an unofficial lender such as a loan shark.
- Previous use of riskier lending is highest among those who are unemployed, on incomes less than £30,000 and by those who have difficulty accessing employment.

## Greater Manchester Residents Survey - Wave 9 - September 2023 -

<https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/media/8676/gm-residents-survey-wave-9-full-report-web.pdf>

At Greater Manchester level almost **2 in 3 (62%)** of those struggling with their debt say they have sought help, a significant increase since July (**51%**). Among those who did not seek help, **3 in 10 (29%)** were unsure whether the advice would help.

Among those who have not sought advice for debt problems, reasons they decided not to seek advice for debt problems:

- Wasn't sure whether advice would help
- Anxiety / mental health reasons
- Embarrassed / stigma
- Worried about the impact on credit record
- Family were unaware of the situation
- Didn't know free debt advice existed

Of the **68%** of GM residents experiencing some difficulty dealing with their current levels of debt. In Tameside, those who haven't sought help was **45%** (March to September 2023).



## Greater Manchester Police & Crime Survey

Greater Manchester Police & Crime Survey of 4155 Tameside residents shows:

- **53%** can afford essentials and occasional luxuries
- **18%** can afford essentials but nothing else
- **17%** can afford luxuries as well as essentials
- **6%** sometimes cant afford all essentials.
- **3%** can rarely afford essentials

# Dealing with Debt Survey

## Methodology:

Dealing with Debt survey questions were developed with TMBC Policy team and Citizens Advice Tameside, and circulated to the Tameside Financial Inclusion Partnership, membership of which includes local authority, local debt advice providers, credit union, housing associations for consultation prior to opening.

Between September and November 2023 (8 weeks) we opened a survey for residents from across Tameside to capture lived experience of debt journey.

Online and paper elements were included so that those without internet access could take part in the survey. Survey questions were created to the requested areas of research:

- journeys of falling into debt
- barriers that people face in seeking debt advice
- services involved in people's debt journeys

## Circulation:

Dealing with Debt survey was circulated through channels:

- Citizens Advice Tameside website - <https://www.tamesidecab.org.uk/about-us/research/> - from September 2023
- Tameside Helping Hands website - Money Management section link: <https://www.tameside.gov.uk/helpinghand/moneymanagement>
- Citizens Advice Tameside Social Media channels: X/Twitter, Facebook, Instagram - September and October 2023 - post reach 1200+
- Paper copies available on CAB front desks in T1 - September 2023
- Circulated to Citizens Advice Tameside team - September 2023
- Tameside Poverty Truth Commission Community and Civic Commissioners - September 2023
- Tameside Financial Inclusion Partnership - September 2023
- Action Together networks - September 2023
- Tameside Communications network - October 2023
- Tameside Partnership Engagement network - October 2023.

## Survey findings:

As at 7th November there were **26 survey responses**. Full details of responses are provided in Appendix 1. An analysis of survey responses is provided below.

### People's journeys of falling into debt

Not all the survey respondents had experienced debt. Almost **70%** respondents were in debt when completing the survey with **72%** struggling to afford debt repayments.

As a result of debt repayments:

- **64%** respondents were borrowing money
- **60%** were cutting back on everyday essentials
- **52%** were experiencing worse mental health
- **36%** were going without essentials such as food or heating
- **28%** were pawning or selling household goods
- **24%** were not paying other bills such as rent or council tax
- **20%** were managing debts successfully

The cost of living crisis had impacted upon the ability of **68%** respondents to make debt payments, making payments impossible for **36%** respondents.

Types of debt experienced spread across priority and non priority debts, most frequently selected was

- Credit card, store card, or payday loan **(64%)**
- Overdraft **(52%)**
- Gas or electricity arrears **(48%)**
- Debts to friends and family **(48%)**
- Personal loan **(44%)**
- Council Tax Arrears **(40%)**

Circumstances contributing to experiencing unmanageable debt were:

- Increased cost of living **(40%)**
- Impact of illness disability **(36%)**
- Low income **(32%)**
- Relationship breakdown **(28%)**
- Employment changes **(28%)**
- Benefit issues **(24%)**
- Household/family changes **(20%)**
- Increased borrowing **(20%)**
- Issues related to budgeting **(16%)**
- Expenditure changes **(12%)**
- No recourse to public funds **(12%)**
- Caring responsibilities **(8%)**
- Pregnancy or maternity **(4%)**

## The barriers that people face in seeking debt advice

**56%** respondents had not contacted services for information, advice or support with debt issues, **44%** had contacted services.

Where respondents had accessed information, advice and support they had done so from local and national services: Citizens Advice, Tameside Welfare Rights, Christians Against Poverty, Payplan, StepChange.

Respondents who had accessed debt services did so at a number of different points in the debt journey:

- When a change in personal circumstances affected ability to repay debts - **17%**
- Within the first 6 months of arrears - **13%**
- When one or more creditors began taking action - **8%**
- Within the first month of arrears - **4%**
- Within the first 12 months of arrears - **4%**
- One respondent commented they had accessed support on many different times.

On barriers to seeking information advice or support **36%** respondents stated a number of issues preventing.

- Embarrassment/Shame
- Buried head in sand
- Other people were worse off
- Tried to Manage selves
- Felt it was their problem to solve

Some perceptions of the impact of obtaining debt advice were stated:

- Didn't want to be blacklisted
- mental health issues
- that debt was manageable within budget
- no faith in government departments
- and perceptions of access - that help isn't available unless claiming benefits.



## How services can be more proactive and intervene earlier in people's debt journeys

When commenting on what did or would have made it easy to get information, advice or support with debt issues responses grouped into themes of:

- **Access:** easy to follow online information, accessible information on credit card debt, online access to information, blended approach of face to face, telephone and video calls, Citizens Advice would be my first port of call, speaking to my rent officer.
- **Increased awareness of services:** better publicity, seeing adverts for free help and advice, a question of how advice can help with debt issues when working and struggling, companies understanding that going to debt management companies will not help, confidentiality and knowing what to expect.
- **Increased service provision:** more specialist advice, I couldn't get to see an advisor CAB was overwhelmed.

## Debt advice and debt remedies

- **42%** respondents who had accessed debt advice were now debt free, or heading towards becoming debt free.
- **9%** were considering options

Few respondents who had accessed debt advice were undertaking formal insolvency solutions:

- **4%** Individual Voluntary Arrangements (IVA)
- **4%** Debt Relief Order (DRO)
- **0%** Bankruptcy

On informal solutions:

- **9%** in Debt Management Plans
- **21%** were contacting creditors to make affordable repayment offers.

Debt Relief Order up front fee had prevented or delayed 2/3 respondents from accessing that option. No respondents reported the Bankruptcy fee as making them decide not to apply, or delaying. No respondents reported recent usage of Individual Voluntary Arrangement as an option, in the last 12 months, former Individual Voluntary Arrangements were reported.

- **72%** respondents had benefit income when considering debt solution options.
- **68%** respondents had seen advertising for debt relief options on social media, television or radio.

Insolvency Solutions are detailed in Appendix 2.

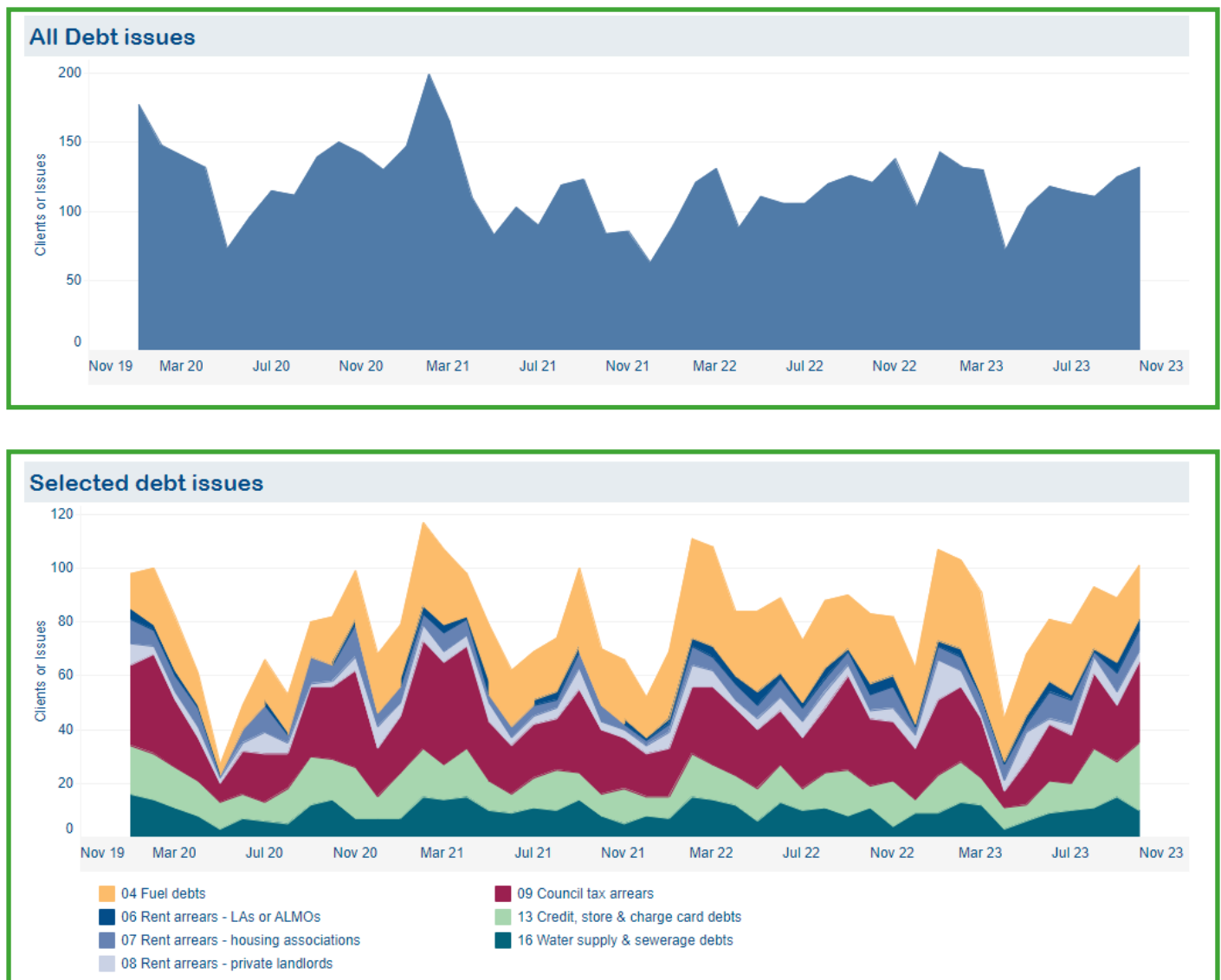
## Seeking debt advice - pandemic and post-pandemic:

Citizens Advice nationally reported on the household debt crisis in April 2023. The numbers of people seeking debt advice - which had reduced during the pandemic largely as a result of Government protections - was increasing through 2021 and 2022, but for Citizens Advice remained lower than pre-pandemic levels.

<https://wearecitizensadvice.org.uk/a-debt-time-bomb-is-about-to-go-off-why-arent-we-doing-anything-about-it-bb2dbecf9b7e>

Monthly variances are shown below for Tameside.

Citizens Advice Tameside Debt Advice volumes January 2020 to October 2023:



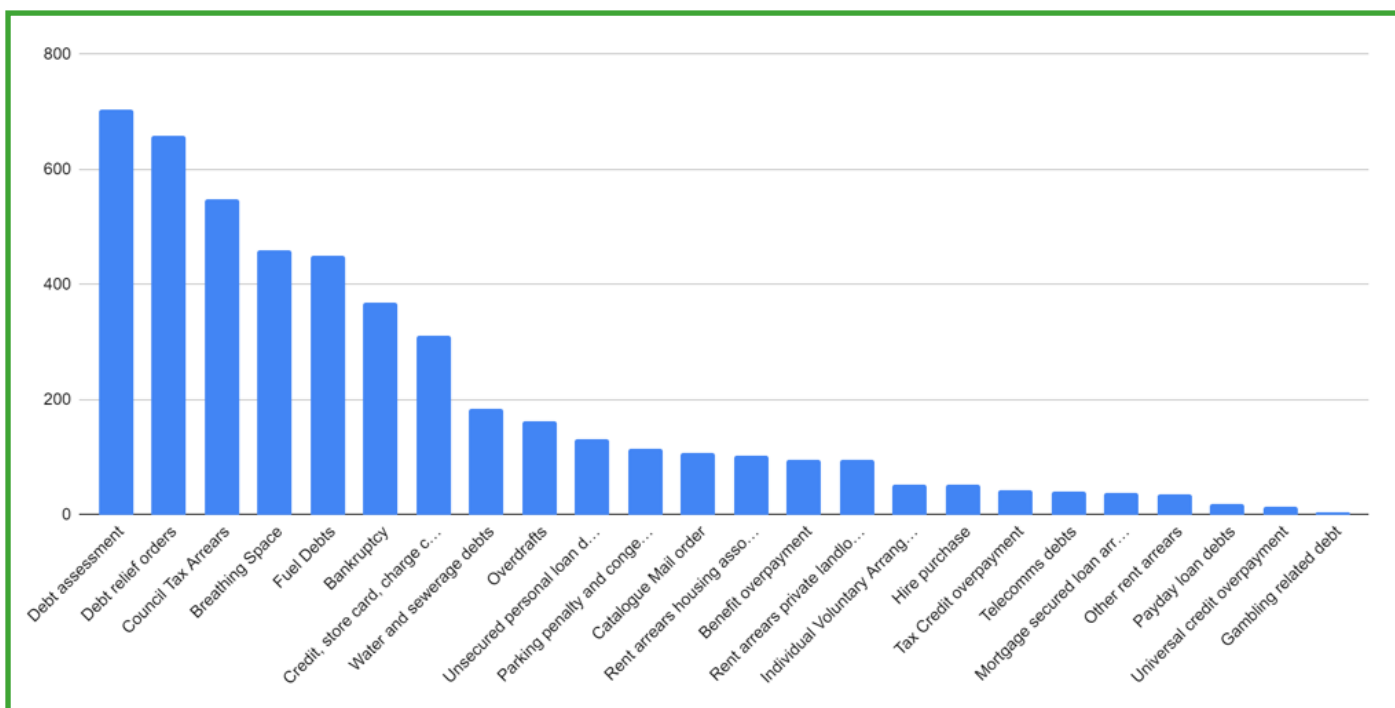
## Example of the impact of local Debt Advice provision

In a twelve month period (01/11/23-31/10/23) Citizens Advice Tameside debt specialist advisers prepared budgeting plans on **1,500** non-priority debts and **857** priority debts, totalling **£3,272,004** for **494** clients.

This included Priority debts of **£1.3m**, non-priority debts totalling **£1.8m**. **1,096** Tameside residents accessed Citizens Advice services for **5,453** debt issues.

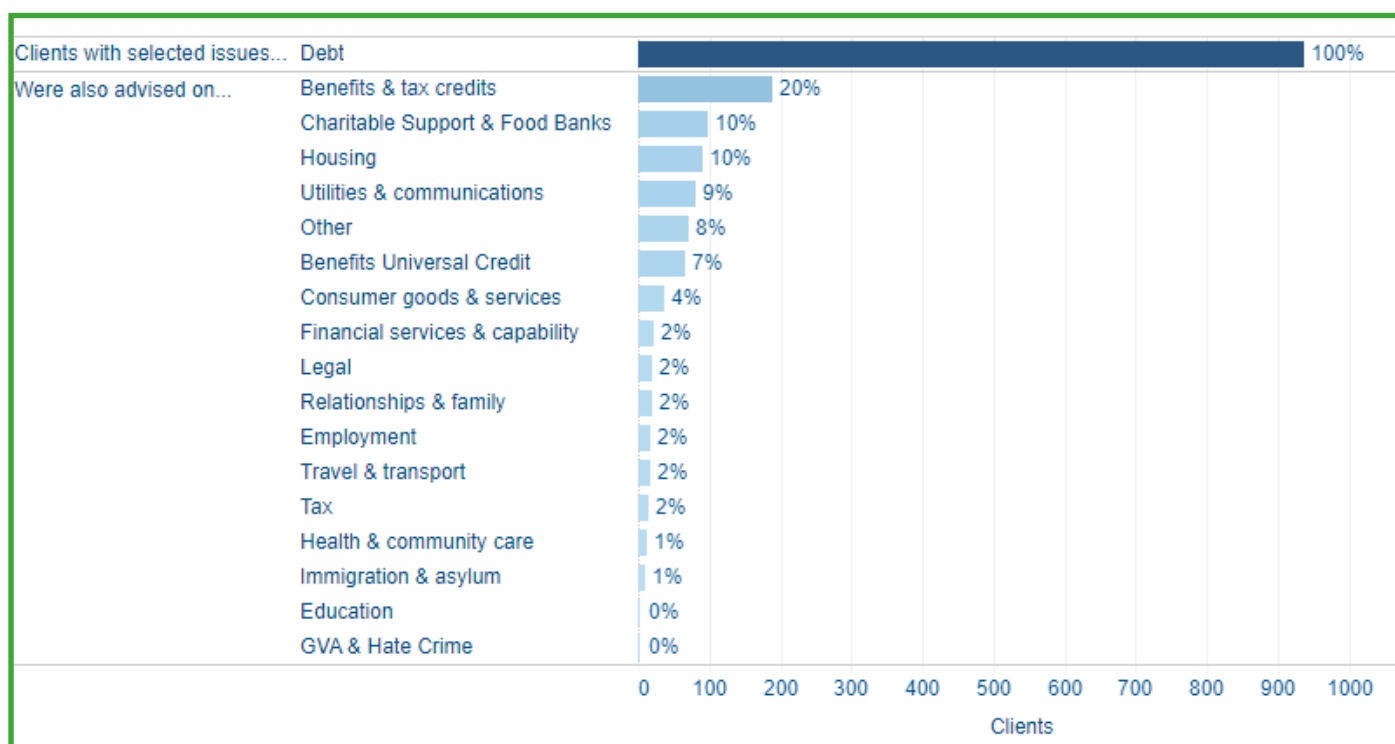
Client profiles:

- **61%** female, **39%** male
- **53%** disabled or with long term health condition
- Age ranges from 20-89
- **84%** White, **16%** BAME



For debt clients advised by Citizens Advice Tameside in the last 12 months, **46%** were additionally advised on other enquiry areas, highlighting the multi-faceted nature of problems.

The chart below details ‘other’ issues presented/identified with debt enquiries:



## Conclusions and Recommendations:

The research experienced limitations and challenges: Despite a wide circulation through pre-existing networks the Dealing with Debt lived experience survey response rate was lower than targeted. There have been contacts continuing into November 2023 from partners around advertising the survey, indicating a continued interest in promoting engagement with the survey.

Exploration of existing resident survey data highlighted themes of cost of living impact, pressures on incomes, experience of and perceptions of accessing support and dealing with debts through family and friends or yourself, awareness of advice services, stigma of accessing advice services, themes of alternative borrowing or unregulated lending to deal with debt, individuals concern of the impact of debt on credit ratings.

Feedback from residents from the Dealing with Debt survey offers initial themes for proactive service responses to addressing barriers to accessing debt advice and support services which are included in the recommendations.

<b>Continuation of Dealing with Debt survey</b>	To capture more robust data, increased feedback of lived experience from Tameside residents ongoing.
<b>Increase awareness of debt advice services</b>	<p>Current feedback suggests a publicity campaign advertising free help and advice, along with information about how debt advice services can help residents locally - what to expect when a resident makes contact, what can services do? How can services help?</p> <p>Campaign elements recommended:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Where to turn for advice, what information and advice can be offered, how?, when?, where? to access debt advice services in Tameside.</li><li>2. Impacts of advice and benefits of seeking advice early in the problem, before enforcement or other priority actions.</li><li>3. Stigma of experiencing financial difficulties, and of seeking help for them.</li></ol>

<b>Multi-channel access to debt advice services</b>	Current feedback suggests a blended approach to debt advice and information service delivery - Range of channels including face to face, telephone, video calls, and easy to follow, accessible online information.
<b>Increased debt advice service provision</b>	Current feedback suggests increasing capacity of debt information and advice service provision, expanding service provision to ease local access. Exploration of triggers of peaks in service demand, seasonal and otherwise, and early intervention referral protocols.
<b>Review of local financial capability/ education provision</b>	Recommended financial education content: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. debt and borrowing - unregulated lenders, high risk lending, unaffordable lending, loan sharks</li> <li>2. credit, credit scores, financial hardship</li> <li>3. income maximisation</li> <li>4. dealing with debt</li> </ol>

# Appendix 1 - Analysis of survey responses

## Survey Responses - debt journey (19 questions):

### 1. Have you experienced debt?

- Yes - **92% (24)**
- No - **8% (2)**

### 2. Are you currently in debt?

- Yes - **69% (18)**
- No - **31% (8)**
- Comments:
  - Loans, credit card and HP
  - Many debts going back 20+ years
  - Council tax

### 3. To what extent, if at all, are you struggling or did you struggle to afford your debt repayments?

- To a great extent - **44% (11)**
- To some extent - **28% (7)**
- Not struggling - **28% (7)**
- Prefer not to say - **0% (0)**

### 4. As a result of debt repayments, are you (tick all that apply):

- Cutting back on everyday essentials such as food, energy, toiletries etc - **60% (15)**
- Going without food, heating, or everyday essentials - **36% (9)**
- Not paying other bills or repayments such as rent, council tax, electricity etc - **24% (6)**
- Borrowing money e.g. on a credit card, from family and friends, payday or doorstep loans - **64% (16)**
- Pawning or selling household goods or items - **28% (7)**
- Experiencing worse mental health - **52% (13)**
- Managing your debts successfully - **20% (5)**
- None of the above - **20% (5)**
- Other (please specify) - **0% (0)**



**5. What impact, if any, has the current cost of living crisis\* had on your ability to make your debt repayments?**

*\*By 'cost of living crisis' we mean the increased cost of food, housing, energy and other essentials in approximately the past 12 months.*

- The cost of living crisis has had no impact on my ability to make repayments - **28% (7)**
- The cost of living crisis has made it slightly more difficult to make repayments - **8% (2)**
- The cost of living crisis has made it much more difficult to make repayments - **24% (6)**
- The cost of living crisis has made it impossible to make repayments - **36% (9)**
- Don't know - **0% (0)**
- Prefer not to say - **4% (1)**

**6. What types of debts do you have or have you had in the past? Tick all that apply:**

- Rent Arrears - **24% (6)**
- Mortgage Arrears - **20% (5)**
- Secured Loans - **24% (6)**
- Council Tax Arrears - **40% (10)**
- Gas or Electricity Arrears - **48% (12)**
- TV Licence - **20% (5)**
- Phone or internet bills - **28% (7)**
- Court fines - **8% (2)**
- Tax Credit Overpayment - **8% (2)**
- Goods on Hire Purchase or Conditional sale - **20% (5)**
- Credit card, store card or payday loan - **64% (16)**
- Bank or building society loan - **20% (5)**
- Debt to friends or family - **48% (12)**
- Catalogue, home credit or in-store credit - **36% (9)**
- Overdraft - **52% (13)**
- Personal loan - **44% (11)**
- Income Tax, National Insurance and VAT - **0% (0)**
- Water rates arrears - **24% (6)**

- Child maintenance arrears - **8% (2)**
- Student loans - **16% (4)**
- Individual Voluntary Arrangement - **8% (2)**
- Debt Management Plan - **4% (1)**
- Debts to loan sharks or illegal money lenders - **8% (2)**
- Not applicable - **4% (1)**
- Other (please specify) **0% - (0)**

## **7. What circumstances contributed to you experiencing unmanageable debt?**

- Relationship breakdown - **28% (7)**
- Household / family changes - **20% (5)**
- Impacts of illness or disability - **36% (9)**
- Unemployment - **20% (5)**
- Employment changes - **28% (7)**
- Low income - **32% (8)**
- Pregnancy or maternity - **4% (1)**
- Caring responsibilities - **8% (2)**
- Expenditure changes - **12% (3)**
- Increased cost of living - **40% (10)**
- Increased borrowing - **20% (5)**
- Issues related to budgeting - **16% (4)**
- No recourse to public funds - **12% (3)**
- Benefit issues - **24% (6)**
- Not Applicable - **16% (4)**
- Other (please specify) - **8% (2)**
- Comments:
  - Mp
  - High bills and cost of living

## **8. Have you ever contacted any services for information, advice or support with debt issues?**

- Yes - **44% (11)**
- No - **56% (14)**

## 9. Who did you contact?

- Free Debt Advice Charity - **42% (8)**
- Fee Paying Debt Advice Service - **0 (0)**
- Not applicable - **58% (11)**
- Name of service:
  - Christians Against Poverty
  - Welfare Rights Debt Service
  - Payplan
  - Step Change
  - Citizens Advice

## 10. When did you contact the service for information, advice, or support with debt issues?

- Within the first month of arrears - **4% (1)**
- Within the first 6 months of arrears - **13% (3)**
- Within 12 months of arrears - **4% (1)**
- When one or more of my creditors began taking recovery action - **8% (2)**
- When I had a change in personal circumstances affecting my ability to repay debts - **17% (4)**
- Not applicable - **50% (12)**
- Other (please specify) - **4% (1)**
- Comment:
  - Many different times

## 11. What prevented you from seeking information, advice or support?

### Comments:

- Embarrassment
- Shame. Other people worse off than me
- We tried to manage ourselves
- I felt it was my problem to solve
- Don't want to be black listed
- Embarrassment
- The Labour government at the time allowed the CSA to ruin the lives of working fathers and I had no faith in government departments

- Embarrassment
- Get no help at all unless your claiming benefits
- Mental health issues
- Felt ashamed
- Debt was manageable
- I was able to manage my finances and repayments within my budget
- Buried head in sand

## **12. What did, or would have, made it easy to get information, advice or support with debt issues?**

- I couldn't get to see an advisor CAB was overwhelmed
- Confidentiality. Knowing what to expect
- Accessing the information online
- Seeing adverts for free help and advice
- More accessible information for credit card debt
- Personally I prefer face to face meetings but a blended approach for those that would like over the phone or Facetime to face to face.
- The company's understanding that going to debt management companies will not help
- None how can advice help with debt issues, when your hard working and struggling
- Don't know
- More specialist advice
- Citizen Advice would be my first point of call.
- Online information, easy to follow
- Speaking to my rent officer
- Better publicity

## **13. If you did access information, advice or support, did this contribute to resolving your debt issue?**

- Yes, I am now debt free - **15% (3)**
- Yes, I am heading towards being debt free - **10% (2)**
- No, I am considering my options - **5% (1)**
- No - **30% (6)**

- I have not accessed information, advice or support for debt - **40% (8)**
- Comments:
  - Still making minimum payments
  - Full time carer
  - They tell us to go bankrupt which would make us homeless

**14. Are you currently using, or have you used, any of these options for dealing with debt in the last 5 years?**

- Individual Voluntary Arrangement (IVA): a legally-binding agreement where you make a regular monthly payment for a fixed period of time (usually 5 years) and your remaining debt is then written off - **0% (0)**
- Debt Relief Order (DRO): an alternative to bankruptcy which lasts for one year and writes off most debts in full. You don't have to make on-going payments but it costs £90 to apply and you have to meet certain conditions to qualify - **4% (1)**
- Bankruptcy: A way of writing off debts that you can't afford to pay. You don't have to meet any special criteria but you do have to pay an upfront fee of £680 - **0% (0)**
- Debt management plan (DMP): an arrangement where you make a reduced monthly payment towards all of your debts for as long as it takes to fully pay - **9% (2)**
- Administration Order: a formal and legally-binding agreement between you and your creditors to pay back your debts over a period of time approved by the court **0% - (0)**
- Contacting creditors to agree more affordable payments yourself - **22% (5)**
- Don't know - **4% (1)**
- None of the above - **61% (14)**
- Comments (3)
  - Yes, I agreed payment plans now I have bad credit file which has ruined my chances of being debt free
  - Previously had IVA but more than 6 years ago
  - Glen sorted me out with what I could afford

**15. Did you decide not to apply for a Debt Relief Order or delay applying mainly or partly because you could not afford the upfront fee of £90?**

- Yes - **67% (2)**
- No - **0% (0)**
- Don't know - **33% (1)**
- Prefer not to say - **0% (0)**

**16. Did you decide not to apply for bankruptcy or delay applying mainly or partly because you could not afford the upfront fee of £680?**

- Yes - **0% (0)**
- No - **0% (0)**
- Don't Know - **0% (0)**
- Prefer not to say - **0% (0)**

**17. Are you currently in an IVA, or have you been in IVA at any point in the past 12 months?**

- Yes - **0% (0)**
- No - **0% (0)**
- Don't know - **0% (0)**
- Prefer not to say - **0% (0)**

**18. When you set up your debt solution, did your income include benefits, tax credits or Universal Credit?**

- Yes - **73% (8)**
- No - **28% (3)**
- Don't Know - **0% (0)**
- Prefer not to say- **0% (0)**

**19. Have you ever seen adverts for debt relief options on social media, television or radio?**

- Yes - **68% (17)**
- No - **20% (5)**
- Don't Know - **12% (3)**
- Prefer not to say- **0% (0)**

## Demographic data was requested in order to check the sample was representative of Tameside residents (13 questions).

### 20. Are you: (please tick one box only)

- Female - **68% (17)**
- Male - **28% (7)**
- Non-binary - **0% (0)**
- Intersex - **0% (0)**
- Prefer not to say - **0% (0)**
- Other (please specify) - **4% (1)**
- Comment:  
What has this got to do with cost of living

### 21. Is your gender identity the same as the sex you were assigned at birth?

- Yes - **100% (24)**
- No - **0% (0)**
- Prefer not to say - **0% (0)**

### 22. Which of the following best represents the total annual income for your household, before deductions tax and National Insurance?

- Less than £9,999 - **4% (1)**
- £10,000 - £19,999 - **48% (12)**
- £20,000 - £29,999 - **16% (4)**
- £30,000 - £39,999 - **4% (1)**
- £40,000 - £49,999 - **0% (0)**
- £50,000 - £59,999 - **4% (1)**
- £60,000 - £74,999 - **8% (2)**
- £75,000 - £99,999 - **4% (1)**
- £100,000 or more - **0% (0)**
- Prefer not to say - **12% (3)**
- Don't know - **0% (0)**

### 23. What is your age? (Please state)

73, 65, 61, 36, 45, 56, 62, 57, 49, 59, 47, 49, 43, 54, 48, 71, 40, 49, 59, 45, 40, 34, 51.

### 24. What is your ethnic group? (Please select from the list below)

- White: English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British - **88% (21)**
- White: Irish - **0% (0)**
- White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller - **0% (0)**
- Mixed/multiple ethnic groups: White & Black Caribbean - **0% (0)**
- Mixed/multiple ethnic groups: White & Black African - **0% (0)**
- Mixed/multiple ethnic groups: White & Asian - **0% (0)**
- Asian/Asian British: Indian - **0% (0)**
- Asian/Asian British: Pakistani - **8% (2)**
- Asian/Asian British: Bangladeshi - **0% (0)**
- Asian/Asian British: Chinese - **0% (0)**
- Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: African - **0% (0)**
- Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: Caribbean - **0% (0)**
- Arab - **0% (0)**
- Any other ethnic group: **4% (1)** White Canadian / British

### 25. What is your religion or belief? (Please tick one box only)

- Christian (including Church of England, Catholic, Protestant and all other Christian denominations) - **46% (11)**
- Buddhist - **0% (0)**
- Jewish - **0% (0)**
- Sikh - **0% (0)**
- Hindu - **0% (0)**
- Muslim - **8% (2)**
- No religion - **38% (9)**
- Any other religion or belief, please state - **8% (2)**
- Comments (2):
  - It's not real
  - None



**26. What is your sexual orientation? (Please tick one box only)**

- Heterosexual/straight - **83% (20)**
- Gay/lesbian - **0% (0)**
- Bisexual - **13% (3)**
- Prefer not to say - **0% (0)**
- Prefer to self-describe - **0% (0)**
- Other sexual orientation (Please state) - **4% (1)**
- Comment:

I am Normal

**27. Are your day-to day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months? Include problems related to old age.**

- Yes, limited a lot - **33% (8)**
- Yes, limited a little - **25% (6)**
- No - **41% (10)**

**28. In the past year, have you experienced any mental health problems?**

- I experienced mental health problems that significantly limited my ability to carry out activities - **29% (7)**
- I experienced mental health problems that somewhat limited my ability to carry out activities - **38% (9)**
- I experienced mental health problems that had no impact on my ability to carry out activities - **8% (2)**
- I have not experienced any mental health problems in the past year - **21% (5)**
- Don't know - **4% (1)**
- Prefer not to say - **0% (0)**

**29. Do you look after, or give any help or support to family members, friends, neighbours or others because of either long term physical or mental ill-health /disability or problems related to old age? (Please tick one box only)**

- No - **54% (13)**
- Yes, 1-19 hours a week - **21% (5)**
- Yes, 20-49 hours a week - **0% (0)**
- Yes, 50 or more a week - **25% (6)**

**30. Are you a member or ex-member of the armed forces?**

- Yes - **4% (1)**
- No - **96% (23)**
- Prefer not to say - **0% (0)**

**31. What is your marital status?**

- Single - **25% (6)**
- Married - **50% (12)**
- Civil Partnership - **0% (0)**
- Divorced - **17% (4)**
- Widowed - **4% (1)**
- Prefer not to say - **4% (1)**

**32. Are you pregnant, on maternity leave or returning from maternity leave?**

- Pregnant - **0% (0)**
- On maternity leave - **0% (0)**
- Returning from maternity leave - **0% (0)**
- No - **96% (23)**
- Prefer not to say - **4% (1)**

## Appendix 2 - Insolvency

### **Total number of insolvencies in Tameside:**

[https://lginform.local.gov.uk/reports/lgastandard?mod-metric=3492&mod-area=E08000008&mod-group=AllMetropolitanBoroughLainCountry\\_England&mod-type=namedComparisonGroup](https://lginform.local.gov.uk/reports/lgastandard?mod-metric=3492&mod-area=E08000008&mod-group=AllMetropolitanBoroughLainCountry_England&mod-type=namedComparisonGroup)

### **Total number of individual insolvencies:**

This is the total number individual insolvencies in an area. This is a sum of Bankruptcies, Debt Relief Orders (DRO) and Individual Voluntary Arrangements (IVAs).

Individual insolvency data are sourced from the Insolvency Service Case Information System (ISCIS). Bankruptcy and DRO data are tabulated by insolvency type and calendar year of order or agreement. IVAs are counted within these statistics once they are registered with the Insolvency Service, and they are reported by year of registration date. There is often a time lag between the date on which the IVA is accepted (known as the date of creditor agreement) and date of registration by licensed insolvency practitioners working for firms that specialise in this area. For some IVAs, the year in which they were registered may differ from the date of creditor agreement.

New monetary eligibility limits for Debt Relief Orders in England and Wales came into effect on 29 June 2021. This included the level of debt at which people can apply for a DRO being increased from £20,000 to £30,000. More people are now able to access this form of debt solution as a result of these changes.

Postcode data are matched against the National Statistics Postcode Lookup, to determine the region and administrative area of each individual. These data are then aggregated to produce counts of insolvencies in each geographical area. The National Statistics Postcode Lookup is derived from data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and Ordnance Survey.

Geographical data for joining the insolvency and population statistics together are sourced from the Open Geography Portal.

City of London included in Westminster and Isles of Scilly included in Cornwall due to low population.

Source name: The Insolvency Service

Collection name: [Individual Insolvencies by Location, Age and Gender](#)

## Total number of individual insolvencies (from 2017 to 2022) for Tameside

Period	<u>Total individual insolvencies</u>			
	Orders			
	Tameside	Minimum for All English metropolitan boroughs	Mean for All English metropolitan boroughs	Maximum for All English metropolitan boroughs
2017	<u>498</u>	269	598	1,499
2018	<u>576</u>	334	711	1,795
2019	<u>694</u>	348	743	1,802
2020	<u>612</u>	340	658	1,793
2021	<u>696</u>	320	671	1,761
2022	<u>718</u>	396	748	1,914

Source: The Insolvency Service [Individual Insolvencies by Location, Age and Gender](#)

## Debt options

What options are available? Insolvency Service: <https://insolvencyservice.blog.gov.uk/2023/03/21/dealing-with-debt-options-for-paying-off-your-debts/>

There are several options if you are unable to pay back the money you owe - these can be formal or informal solutions. You can also use the MoneyHelper tool to find free expert advice.

Before you make a decision about what to do, you should seek free expert advice from a money adviser. This can be from either an organisation like Citizens Advice or through the MoneyHelper: [Debt Advice Locator](#) | [Syndication](#) | [MoneyHelper](#).

Your adviser will look at your circumstances - for example the types of creditors you have (who do you owe money to), and the terms of the agreements you have signed.

That will help them to advise you on the best way forward, which may include a “formal” or an informal” solution depending on your situation.

## Formal solutions

Formal insolvency solutions are legal processes, and they include:

- A Debt Relief Order;
- An Individual Voluntary Arrangement or;
- Bankruptcy.

If you are in one of these processes, the people you owe money to (your creditors) can't take action against you to get you to repay them and you won't have to repay all the money you owe, although this will depend on your circumstances. Any new debt you incur after you have entered one of these processes won't usually be included and you will need to deal with those new creditors separately.

## Informal solutions

Informal solutions are options for people who are able to repay their creditors in full and allow them to come to an agreement with their creditors to make repayments over a period of time.

Because these agreements are informal - not legally-binding - you can usually more easily change the terms of the agreement if your circumstances change. However, because they are not legally-binding this does mean that your creditors can change their minds and they can still take action to recover the money you owe.

### Informal solutions include:

- A [consolidation loan](#);
- A [debt management plan \(DMP\)](#) or;
- Continuing to pay each creditor individually but with payment plans.

## Breathing Space

Breathing Space is a government scheme for people living in England and Wales. The scheme gives you temporary protection from your creditors while you get advice and plan for how you'll repay any debts.

Breathing Space gives you protection from your creditors contacting you or chasing you for the money you owe for up to 60 days.

If you are getting mental health crisis treatment, Breathing Space allows you a longer period of protection from your creditors. In this case the scheme will last for the length of your treatment plus 30 days.

You need to speak to a [money adviser](#) if you want to apply for a Breathing Space scheme. If the adviser thinks Breathing Space is right for you, they will make an application for you.

You cannot apply for Breathing Space if you are in a Debt Relief Order, an Individual Voluntary Arrangement (IVA) or you are an undischarged bankrupt. Also, you cannot apply for Breathing Space if you have already accessed the scheme in the last 12 months unless it was for a mental health crisis.

More information on the Breathing Space scheme is available here: [What is Breathing Space and how can it help me | MoneyHelper](#).

## Debt Relief Order

A Debt Relief Order (DRO) usually lasts for 12 months. After this time the amounts you owe to the creditors who are included in the DRO are written off, and you do not have to pay them.

You need to [apply for a DRO through a specially approved debt adviser](#) (an intermediary), and you can obtain one if the following apply to you:

- The money you owe is less than £30,000 (including any charges and interest).
- You have less than £75 spare money left at the end of each month after paying all of your essential outgoings (known as disposable income).
- You've lived or worked in England or Wales in the last 3 years.
- Your assets (the things that you own) aren't worth more than £2,000 in total. You can also own a car up to a value of £2,000.
- You've not had a DRO approved in the last 6 years.

The fee for applying for a DRO is £90 which must be paid when your application is made, although you can pay in instalments. You will not get a refund if your application for a DRO is refused.

If your DRO is accepted your details will be added to the [Individual Insolvency Register](#) and will stay there until 3 months after your DRO ends.

There will also be a number of things that you will be unable to do while you are in a DRO, details can be found here: [Getting a Debt Relief Order - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

After 12 months, these DRO restrictions will come to an end. The restrictions can last for more than 12 months if you are found to have acted carelessly or dishonestly.

A DRO will usually appear on your credit file for 6 years.

More information on what you need to know about DROs can be found here: [Getting a Debt Relief Order - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

## Individual Voluntary Arrangement (IVA)

An IVA is a legally-binding agreement with your creditors – the people or organisations to whom you owe money – to pay all or part of your debts. If an IVA seems to be a good option for you, your debt adviser will be able to help you get in touch with an Insolvency Practitioner to put one in place.

IVAs are available for people living in England and Wales. If you live in Scotland, you could get a [Protected Trust Deed](#) instead. For more information, please visit: [Trust deed explained | Accountant in Bankruptcy \(aib.gov.uk\)](#).

IVAs usually last for 5 years, during which you will pay a monthly amount to an Insolvency Practitioner who will pass this onto your creditors. The Insolvency Practitioner will keep some of the money you pay for their fees for setting up and managing the IVA for you. This will form part of your agreement with your creditors.

Your IVA will be added to the [Individual Insolvency Register](#) and will stay there until 3 months after your IVA is completed.

An IVA will appear on your credit file for 6 years after it has ended.

It is important to know that if you do not keep up with your agreed IVA payments your IVA may be ended, and you will still owe money to your creditors which you will have to find a different way to repay.

More information on what you need to know about IVAs can be found: [What you need to know about Individual Voluntary Arrangements \(IVAs\) - Insolvency Service \(blog.gov.uk\)](#).



## Bankruptcy

The bankruptcy process makes sure your assets are shared among those you owe money to (creditors) and lets you make a fresh start free from debt (with some restrictions for a period of time).

To obtain a bankruptcy order, you can make an online application to the Insolvency Service. Your application will be considered by someone called an adjudicator who will decide whether you should be made bankrupt.

The cost of the application is £680. You can pay this fee in instalments; however, you need to have paid the whole amount before you can complete your application. You may be able to apply for a grant or get help from a charity if you are struggling to afford the fee.

If the adjudicator makes you bankrupt, your assets (the things that you own) can be used to pay your debts. You must hand over your assets to the person who is managing your bankruptcy, known as your trustee. This can be the Official Receiver, who works for the Insolvency Service, or an Insolvency Practitioner.

You can usually keep items needed for your job, such as tools or a car, household items such as clothing and furniture and any money you've paid into a pension. Your bank accounts may be frozen, but your trustee may release any money you need urgently, for example to buy food, and your partner's share of any money in a joint account. It is up to your bank to decide whether to let you continue to use your accounts.

If you own a house, it might be sold depending on the amount of your equity; that is the difference between the value of your home, and the amount you owe on your mortgage and any other debts secured against the house.

You may be able to remain in your home if:

- the value of your equity is very small and your trustee decides not to sell your home or;
- the equity can be sold to someone else, such as a partner or family member, so that you can continue to live there.

You may be asked to make monthly payments from any spare income you have (any money you have left over each month after paying your essential outgoings), for a period of up to 3 years. This is known as an Income Payments Agreement. Your trustee will set up the agreement. If you are not able to agree on the amount you should pay, your trustee can ask the Court to order you to make payments. This is known as an Income Payments Order.

There will also be a number of things that you will be unable to do while you are bankrupt (known as bankruptcy restrictions, details of which can be found here: [Applying to become bankrupt: Restrictions - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/apply-to-become-bankrupt/restrictions)).

Bankruptcy usually lasts for 12 months and the restrictions last until your bankruptcy ends. The restrictions can last for more than 12 months if you do not do what you are asked by your trustee or if you are found to have acted carelessly or dishonestly.

More information on what you need to know about bankruptcy can be found here: [Applying to become bankrupt: Overview - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/apply-to-become-bankrupt/overview).

## Appendix 3 - Service coverage - Debt advice provision in Tameside

Money and Pension Service (MaPS) gathered estimated nationwide data in 2019 on face to face debt advice supply. For Tameside this figure was 1,100 cases annually. Supply defined as the total number of clients who received advice/casework for their debt problems through face-to-face, telephone and advice channels.

[https://lginform.local.gov.uk/reports/lgastandard?mod-metric=13447&mod-area=E08000008&mod-group=AllMetropolitanBoroughLInCountry\\_England&mod-type=namedComparisonGroup](https://lginform.local.gov.uk/reports/lgastandard?mod-metric=13447&mod-area=E08000008&mod-group=AllMetropolitanBoroughLInCountry_England&mod-type=namedComparisonGroup)

### **Service mapping and coverage - how to find a debt adviser:**

Anyone providing debt management services, debt counselling, debt adjusting, whether or not they charge a fee, must be Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) authorised. FCA rules and guidance apply to anyone authorised to provide any of the following services:

- advice on how to restructure debts, alter debt repayments or achieve early resettlement of debts
- contacting creditors in order to make any of the above arrangements
- providing the facility for a debtor to make a single payment which is then distributed on behalf of the debtor to their creditors
- reviews of the debtor's financial circumstances and/or payments

There are a number of directories and tools that have been developed locally and nationally and are available online to source debt and money advice in Tameside and through national providers.

### **Advice Tameside Referral Tool:**

<https://www.tameside.gov.uk/Advice-Tameside/Advice-Tameside-Referral-Tool>

### **TMBC Helping Hand - Money Management:**

<https://www.tameside.gov.uk/helpinghand/moneymanagement>

### **Tameside Money Advice Referral Tool:**

<https://www.gmpovertyaction.org/money-advice-referral-tools/>

### **MoneyHelper Debt Advice Locator:**

<https://www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en/money-troubles/dealing-with-debt/debt-advice-locator>

From these tools, services delivering debt advice in Tameside are:

**Tameside Council's Debt Advice service:**

<https://www.tameside.gov.uk/debtadvice>

Tameside Welfare Rights, offering free, independent, confidential advice and assistance with debt problems to people with rent or mortgage arrears. Tameside Welfare Rights have 1 Debt Adviser co-located at Housing Advice, dealing with evictions.

**Citizens Advice Tameside:**

<https://www.tamesidecab.org.uk/get-advice/>

Offering generalist level and specialist level debt advice, with 3 Debt Caseworkers funded by Money and Pensions Service (MaPS). Generalist advice funding from Tameside MBC and Housing associations to deliver generalist level debt advice in localities including Jigsaw, Irwell Valley and Onward Homes.

**Jigsaw Homes:**

<https://www.jigsawhomes.org.uk/information-article/money-advice/>

Helping with Benefits advice and applications, Maximising income, Debt advice and solutions. Money Advice Team includes 8 Welfare Benefit advisers and Debt advisers.

**Christians Against Povert :**

[Christians Against Poverty](#)

Free debt and budgeting help run through local churches, supporting anyone regardless of their religion. [www.capuk.org](http://www.capuk.org) 1 centre manager, 1 debt coach.

**National Debt advice providers:**

**National Debtline:**

[www.nationaldebtline.org](http://www.nationaldebtline.org)

Offers free debt advice online through its digital advice tool, web guides. National Debtline has helped millions of people with their debts. They'll talk you through options and give clear advice on how to take back control. Reported helping 372 people in Tameside in the last 12 months <https://www.questmedianetwork.co.uk/news/tameside-reporter/685-tameside-residents-access-new-breathing-space-scheme-as-debt-charity-urges-more-to-seek-advice/>.

### **StepChange Debt Charity:**

[www.stepchange.org.uk](http://www.stepchange.org.uk)

Our online advice tool has helped over 1.7m people. Create a budget and get a personal action plan with practical next steps. Get free help from the UK's leading debt charity. Call the UK's leading debt charity. We help change the lives of thousands of people every week. Get free, confidential advice and practical solutions to help you deal with your debts. No Tameside level data obtained.

### **PayPlan:**

[www.payplan.com](http://www.payplan.com)

PayPlan's supportive, non-judgemental team of advisers help thousands of people beat their debts every year, and treat all of their calls with the strictest confidence. PayPlan's online debt solution tool, PlanFinder, can give you a personalised debt solution in as little as 15 minutes. They also offer free live chat and email support for immediate help. No Tameside level data obtained.

### **Tameside Financial Inclusion Partnership:**

Formerly Money Information Network Tameside, meets quarterly, as a network of organisations and services working towards financial inclusion in the borough with attendees from financial inclusion and tenancy support roles, along with money advice and neighbourhood support roles, credit union, local authority and third sector advice. Includes: Irwell Valley, Onward Homes, Regenda, Jigsaw, Ashton Pioneer Homes, Cashbox Credit Union, Tameside MBC, Citizens Advice Tameside, Department for Work and Pensions.