





The content

Debt Advice Handbook 15th edition

Description

With living costs and unemployment rising, budgets squeezed and problem debt on the increase, no adviser should be without this essential guide to the practice and process of giving money advice in England and Wales.

Who's this book for?

It is essential for debt advisers, welfare rights advisers, lawyers, local authority and housing association staff, social workers and union official.

What does it do?

The handbook provides the most comprehensive information needed by advisers on the key stages of money advice, including interviewing clients, establishing liability, prioritising debts, preparing a financial statement, negotiating with creditors and dealing with bailiffs. Fully indexed and cross-referenced to law, regulations and official guidance, and to court and tribunal decisions Includes tactical guidance and examples

What's new?

Fully updated to cover all recent changes to legislation, caselaw and court procedure and practice Emphasis is placed on taking due care of vulnerable clients and making sure that any payment arrangements agreed are appropriate. There is a focus on sustainable credit arrangements that do not affect a client's abilities to pay essential living expenses and priority debts.

Properties

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This content was last updated:
2025-06-26

Print publication date
Feb, 2024

Print ISBN
978 1 915324 11 5

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General stay

If a court order has been made, or is about to be made, and there is no available income, capital or assets, the county court can make an order for a general stay of judgment or enforcement. This means that the court will order that there is no enforcement of the judgment either until something happens (eg, there is another court order following a change in the client's circumstances) or for a fixed period, possibly with a review at the end. See [here](#) for an explanation of the court's power to make such an order and how you can help the client make an application.

Administration order

If a client already has at least one county court (or High Court) judgment against them and their total debts do not exceed £5,000, they can apply for an administration order. The client makes one monthly payment to the court, which 'administers' it and divides it equitably among all creditors. See [here](#) for details.

Bankruptcy and debt relief orders

Bankruptcy is a legal procedure in which the inability of a client to pay their debts is acknowledged and the majority of unsecured creditors can no longer pursue their debts, which are eventually written off. A third party (known as the 'trustee in bankruptcy') takes over the handling of the client's financial affairs for the benefit of their creditors and distributes a proportion of any available income and/or capital resources to them.

Bankruptcy may be a suitable strategy for a client if:

- debts have arisen which creditors will not write off;
- they do not own a home or have little or negative equity;
- they do not have any available assets or capital;
- they have a low available income compared with the amount of debt, which means it would take many years to repay their creditors.

A debt relief order may be an appropriate option for clients who have:

- total debts of £30,000 or less (£50,000 with effect from 28 June 2024);
- available income of £75 a month or less;
- gross assets worth £2,000 or less (the client can also own a motor vehicle worth less than £2,000) (£4,000 with effect from 28 June 2024).

See Chapter 10 for further details, including the advantages, disadvantages and consequences.

Individual voluntary arrangement

An individual voluntary arrangement (IVA) is a means whereby a client can protect themselves from further action from creditors by entering into a legally binding arrangement with them, supervised by an insolvency practitioner. It is often described as informal bankruptcy and may be a preferred option for a client if they have an asset that they could lose through bankruptcy and would not lose through an IVA – eg, their home. See Chapter 10 for further details.

Time order

An application for a time order may be appropriate either to prevent a creditor under a regulated credit agreement from obtaining a judgment or to freeze interest or other charges. See here for further details.

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Please be aware that welfare rights law and guidance change frequently. This page was printed on Friday, October 17, 2025 and may go out of date.