

DEALING WITH DEBT – 5 THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW

- There are sources of free debt advice and services. You can find out more by contacting the Money Advice Service on <https://www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk/en/articles/where-to-go-to-get-free-debt-advice> or 0300 500 5000 (8-8 Monday to Friday, 9-1 on Saturday).
- You should have been advised on all the options for dealing with your debt. Protocol compliant providers will explain all the options that are open to you (e.g. bankruptcy, debt relief order, individual voluntary arrangement, debt management plan). The advantages and disadvantages of each will be discussed with you so that you can make an informed choice.
- You will know the estimated total cost to you of the arrangement and the time it will take for your debts to be paid. Protocol compliant providers always give you this information. If your provider does not, you must ask to find out. Any money you pay to your provider to cover their fees will not be used to repay your debts. Think carefully if more money is being used to pay your provider than your creditors.
- Your provider will go through a full and accurate budgeting process with you. This is vital to make sure that the payments you are asked to make are affordable for yourself and fair to your creditors.
- If you are not happy with the service you receive, you can complain. You should refer such complaints to the provider first to give them a chance to put things right. They should tell you clearly how to do this. If they are a member of the DRF or DEMSA they will also tell you how to use their own conciliation and complaints scheme as a second step. You can be repaid any fees charged and may be awarded compensation by these schemes. If you are still not happy with the outcome, you can complain to the Financial Ombudsman Service(<http://www.financial-ombudsman.org.uk/>) which is an independent service who will look into your complaint and can award you compensation if they decide in your favour.