

# Using the Money Advice and Budgeting Service

your  
guide

- free
- independent
- confidential



**mabs**

Money Advice & Budgeting Service

# What is MABS?

MABS, the Money Advice and Budgeting Service, is the State's only free money and debt advice service. We work with all kinds of people, who may have all kinds of personal debt.

Our Service is fully funded by the government, making it completely free to the public. The Service is independent, with no links to any banks or credit unions, and all your dealings with MABS will be confidential, in accordance with our confidentiality policy.

## Where are we?

With more than sixty offices all around the country, we are available in every county. We also have a website – [www.mabs.ie](http://www.mabs.ie) and our Helpline can be contacted Monday to Friday, 9am to 8pm, on **0761 07 2000**.

## What do we do?

MABS works with people who may be struggling with debt or who need help in managing their money. We also talk to government and lenders to find better solutions for those who have money problems, as well as developing tools and resources to help people avoid getting in over their heads.

MABS does not give out any money – instead, we work with clients to ensure that they are getting all income they are entitled to, that they are getting the best value out of this income, and in working out sustainable payment plans with creditors, where debt becomes a problem.

## Who goes to MABS?

All kinds of people, from all walks of life, with all kinds of personal debt come to MABS. We cannot help with debt arising from a business, but will help business people in dealing with their personal debts. We make no judgement on those who come to us – we know people can get into money difficulty all too easily – sometimes getting out needs a hand. That's what we're here for.

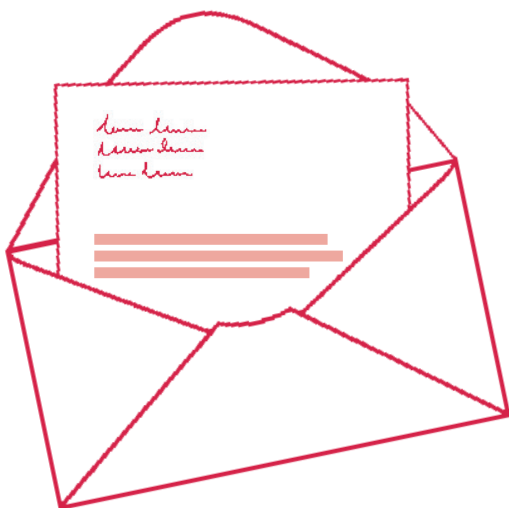
## Why do people go to MABS?

Some people come to us because they feel they are losing control – they may be falling behind in paying bills or loans, they may be facing a disconnection, or they may be facing legal action over a debt or a mortgage. These things can happen very easily.

We know in MABS that people borrow money in good faith, intending to repay as agreed. Sometimes though, life happens – family break-down, illness, bereavement can all cause your financial security to be upset. Losing a job or having a reduction in income is another trigger.

If you have been living on very little money for a long time, it can be very hard to save, and so you may find it a struggle, and you may even find it impossible to borrow money at a reasonable cost. All of these things can act as a trigger to cause your financial well-being to suffer. And when this happens, you may find that your health will also be impacted – sleepless nights, stress, weight loss or gain, depression are all common effects of living with problem debt.

Our advice? Talk to MABS – make contact early, don't delay. Even if you are not certain that we can help, sometimes sharing your concerns can be a help – it may be the nudge you need to get back on an even keel.



# So how do you get in touch?

We want to make our process an easy and supportive one for all of our clients. For this reason, we have three ways of getting support from MABS – see which one is for you.

## Our Website

[www.mabs.ie](http://www.mabs.ie) is our support to the public. You'll find easy to use advice and tips on this site, with lots of resources to help you to help yourself. If you think you can handle your particular problem yourself, our website will offer a guiding hand. It will take you through the steps in dealing with your creditor, from working out how much you can afford to pay, right up to agreeing and maintaining a payment plan.

There are lots of tools on this site for managing your money, and if you would like to grow your skill in this area, you can get help here. If you're interested in our policy work, then you can read about that, as well as about the wide range of research we are involved in, all on our website.

## Our Helpline

The MABS Helpline is open Monday to Friday, 9am to 8pm, and can be reached on **0761 07 2000**. We have a highly trained and very experienced team of Helpline Advisers who staff this line each day. Our team is made up of people from a wide range of backgrounds, all trained to bring their expertise to assist you.

Callers to the Helpline will be asked some initial questions – this is to help our Adviser work out the nature of your problem, and determine how best to suit you. If you wish to remain anonymous, you can do so, and you do not need to give your name. We do record calls – this is part of our ongoing commitment to training and quality assurance, and you will hear a message about this at the start of your call.

Some of our callers just want a little information or some guidance – you might call us because you have received a letter or a call from a creditor, or maybe you've missed a payment and are unsure what to do next. Our Adviser will spend as long as is needed to help. In many cases, the call can be enough to provide you with what you need. Where it can help, the Adviser will offer to send some materials out to you, or will refer you to our website for further help.

In some cases, the Adviser may believe that you need a face-to-face appointment with one of our offices. This will be explained to you, and the Adviser will also set out how your details will be passed on to the local office. You will be advised as to how to prepare for your appointment, and helped to gather your documents.

The MABS Helpline secured the Gold Star Quality Assurance mark in 2014 – our ongoing commitment to quality is the hallmark of our Service.

## **Our Local Offices**

MABS operates a network of 65 offices all around the country. Each office is staffed by a team of Money Advisers and Administrators, all trained and highly skilled in their work. MABS invests heavily in our staff development, and many of our Advisers are Accredited Money Advisers (AMA) with the University of Ulster. All staff are trained in all aspects of debt and money management, as well as in skills relating to supporting people through times of crisis. Most of all, MABS staff are compassionate, caring and non-judgemental. We believe that it is possible to give a highly professional service in a caring manner.

If your first contact with MABS is through the office, then a staff member here will take some initial information at the start. This is to find out a little about the problems you may be having, and to determine how best to help you.

Where it appears that the Helpline can be of better help to you, you will be advised of this. If it has been decided that you will need to see a Money Adviser, an appointment will be made. You will get confirmation of the appointment time and date in writing, and you will also be asked to bring some documents with you. Preparing well for the initial appointment will help us to help you even better – of course we know you may not have everything to hand straight away, but we will work with you to gather all you need.

You will generally receive a text reminder a day or two before your appointment; if you think you will not be able to keep the appointment, then please let the office know so that your slot can be given to another client.

## **Is there a Waiting List?**

MABS will never leave anyone in an emergency situation waiting to see an Adviser. All staff – at the Helpline and in our offices – are trained to deal with emergencies, and will do so. Your initial assessment will be done immediately, and although you may then have to wait a week or two to see your Adviser, this period is time you actually need – this is your opportunity to gather your papers, to look at your spending, and to try to have a full picture of your money situation before you come in to see an Adviser.

## The First Appointment

When you come along to your first appointment, the Adviser will take you through our Customer Charter and our Client Authorisation process. This is for a number of reasons.

- Firstly, to set out what we can do for you, what you can expect from us, what we can and cannot offer
- Secondly, to set out what we expect from you – a need for you to be fully open and honest with us, a need for you to be respectful of our staff and processes
- Thirdly, to grant us authority to act on your behalf, so that we can speak with your creditors about your affairs.

The Adviser will also explain our Confidentiality policy and any other of our policies that will be important for you to understand.

When you're happy with this, you will be asked to sign – this becomes the basis for our relationship.

Coming along prepared to your first appointment will be very helpful – your appointment letter will set out exactly what to bring, but a general guide would include:

### Your Income

- Payslips, Social Welfare receipt or payment book

### Your Spending

- Some of your household bills – gas, electricity, phone

## Your Debts

- Letters or statements from any bank or Credit Union that you owe money to
- Statements from any catalogue company you shop with
- Your Credit Union book, if you have an account
- Letters you have received from any creditor, debt collector or solicitor
- Letters you have received from the courts
- Your books from any door-to-door salesman or money lender
- Any original credit agreements if you have any
- Detail of where you owe money and the amounts – even if not exact

At this appointment, your Adviser will look first at your income, working with you to make sure that you are getting all supports and entitlements you may have a right to. Your Adviser will then discuss your spending with you – you will not be judged on how you spend your money – you will be asked to give an idea of how much is spent on various items so that your budget can be prepared. Lastly, the Adviser will look at your debt, seeing where money is owed, what stage of recovery it is at, and what action your creditor is taking.

## The Money Advice Process

At the end of your first appointment, the Adviser will have a plan to work with you. It will take some time to put into action, and you will be asked to carry out certain tasks, or to bring back further information. Our process is tried and tested, and MABS has worked with hundreds of thousands of people over almost twenty-five years.



We try to achieve two things through the money advice process:

- Firstly, we want to support you in finding a sustainable solution to your problem debt
- Secondly, we want to help you develop your skill and knowledge so you can have better control over your money

The Money Adviser will work with you to prepare a budget and a financial statement; this will form the basis of any negotiation undertaken with any creditor. MABS is an honest broker – this means we deal fairly and honestly with all. In general, we reach pro rata agreements with creditors – this means that each creditor gets paid according to how much he is owed, with no creditor given preference. In some cases, the Money Adviser will negotiate on your behalf; in other cases, he will support you to do so for yourself.

Once a negotiation has been completed, the Money Adviser will assist you in setting up a payment system to keep to that new agreement. You will be supported for as long as you need, post- agreement, and MABS will help as your circumstances change.

## **Agreements with Creditors**

In general, MABS reaches voluntary agreements with creditors. These are agreements which the borrower and the lender together agree, where a reduced payment is accepted, once the creditor is satisfied that this is all he can reasonably expect. Legal action will stop, and provided the agreement is honoured by the client, it will run its course. In many cases, the lender will agree to some level of write-down of the debt.

New laws in insolvency mean that borrowers can also avail of legal solutions to problem debt. These are processed through the Insolvency Service of Ireland -ISI – and your Money Adviser can talk you through these, helping you to decide whether one of these might be a solution for you.

MABS is responsible for the processing of one of these – a Debt Relief Notice (DRN) – which is designed for people with unsecured debt of less than €35,000, a limited income and no assets. These are processed by staff in MABS known as Approved intermediaries (AIs). At the time of your initial contact with MABS, your suitability for a DRN will be looked at and if it appears that your circumstances satisfy the criteria for a DRN, you will be advised of this.

MABS also has a new role in helping people in mortgage arrears and in danger of losing their homes. MABS now has a Dedicated Mortgage Arrears Advice Service available throughout the country. It's free, independent and confidential. MABS is the 'gateway' for mortgage debt advice and referral to other free professional support services.

In addition we provide a Court Mentor Service at all repossession hearings in the Circuit Courts. If you are going to Court you can ring the MABS Helpline 0761 07 2000 to find out who will be there from MABS on the day. Otherwise, look out for MABS staff at the Court. The MABS Court Mentor will be able to tell you what is happening in the Court, what other supports are available to you and, if you wish, refer you to the local MABS or for other free supports with your mortgage arrears case.

## **So What Now?**

If you are concerned about your financial well-being, if you feel that things are getting on top of you or if your creditors are writing or calling because you have fallen behind, then get in touch – call, click, come – **MABS can help.**

**0761 07 2000**

**[www.mabs.ie](http://www.mabs.ie)**

## How to contact us:

**Helpline: 0761 07 2000**

**Website: [www.mabs.ie](http://www.mabs.ie)**

### **Carlow**

Carlow Town 0761 07 2070

### **Cavan**

Cavan Town 0761 07 2410

### **Clare**

Ennis 0761 07 2430

### **Cork**

Charleville 0761 07 2420

Dunmanway 0761 07 2450

Mallow 0761 07 2440

Cork City (Nth. Main St) 0761 07 2090

### **Donegal**

Buncrana 0761 07 2470

Derrybeg 0761 07 2650

Donegal Town 0761 07 2480

Letterkenny 0761 07 2460

### **Dublin**

Ballyfermot 0761 07 2800

Ballymun 0761 07 2150

Blanchardstown 0761 07 2330

Cherry Orchard 0761 07 2110

Clondalkin 0761 07 2270

Coolock 0761 07 2290

Crumlin 0761 07 2500

Dorset Street 0761 07 2510

Dun Laoghaire 0761 07 2530

Dundrum 0761 07 2310

Finglas / Cabra 0761 07 2170

National Traveller MABS 0761 07 2230

Francis Street 0761 07 2350

Lombard Street 0761 07 2520

Swords 0761 07 2550

Tallaght 0761 07 2370

**Galway**

Connemara (Ceathru Rua)	0761 07 2820
Loughrea	0761 07 2580
Galway City	0761 07 2570
Tuam	0761 07 2560

**Kerry**

Tralee	0761 07 2190
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**Kildare**

Kilcock	0761 07 2590
Newbridge	0761 07 2600

**Kilkenny**

Kilkenny City	0761 07 2610
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**Laois**

Portlaoise	0761 07 2620
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**Leitrim**

Ballinamore	0761 07 2630
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**Limerick**

Upper Mallow Street	0761 07 2210
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**Longford**

Church Street	0761 07 2640
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**Louth**

Drogheda	0761 07 2490
Dundalk	0761 07 2540

**Mayo**

Ballina	0761 07 2660
Castlebar	0761 07 2670

**Meath**

Navan	0761 07 2680
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**Monaghan**

Castleblaney	0761 07 2690
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**Offaly**

Tullamore	0761 07 2710
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**Roscommon**

Abbey Street	0761 07 2720
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**Sligo**

Fish Quay	0761 07 2730
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## **Tipperary**

Tipperary Town	0761 07 2130
Clonmel	0761 07 2750
Nenagh	0761 07 2760
Thurles	0761 07 2740

## **Waterford**

Canada Street	0761 07 2050
Dungarvan	0761 07 2770

## **Westmeath**

Athlone	0761 07 2400
Mullingar	0761 07 2700

## **Wexford**

Main Street	0761 07 2780
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## **Wicklow**

Arklow	0761 07 2390
Bray	0761 07 2250



**How to contact us:**

**Helpline: 0761 07 2000**

**Website: [www.mabs.ie](http://www.mabs.ie)**

#### Disclaimer

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# mabs

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## log on

[www.mabs.ie](http://www.mabs.ie)



## phone

Helpline: 0761 07 2000



## drop in

We have offices nationwide.  
Our website and helpline will  
direct you to your local office.

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