

# NHS Stressline tackles New Year money blues 0300 123 2000

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## Department of Health (National)



As the New Year approaches, people who are worried about debt, housing and employment will get practical and emotional support from a new NHS helpline launched today by Phil Hope, Care Services Minister.

NHS Stressline callers will receive practical information and advice from trained health advisors. If they are suffering from stress, anxiety or depression, they will be directed to a wider package of financial and mental health support. The Stressline number is 0300 123 2000 and it is open daily from **8am-10pm**.

The helpline, which has been successfully piloted, is linked to the Government's flagship Talking Therapies programme and will be the focus of a new public awareness campaign in the New Year.

The facts show:

- Debt can be a cause and a consequence of mental health problems, such as stress, anxiety and depression, but often people do not know where to seek help;
- Nearly half the UK population worried about money and debt in 2009;
- A quarter of people with mental health problems experience debt, but a third of people these people do not seek help for financial difficulties; and
- Average household debt in the UK is £9,120 excluding mortgages.

### **Phil Hope, Care Services Minister, said,**

“After the festive season many of us take a long hard look at our finances. Tightening our belts and getting out of debt always features high on the list of New Year's resolutions. But debt can have a serious impact on a person's mental wellbeing, causing stress, depression and even suicidal thoughts.

“The NHS Stressline is there to help improve people's mental and financial wellbeing. Whether it's practical advice, emotional support or the first step in getting treatment for depression, it will give people real help to tackle their money worries.”

### **Jacqui Jedrzejewski, NHS Direct Mental Health Lead, said:**

“We know the credit crunch hits people in many different ways, and job insecurity, redundancy, debt and money problems can all cause feelings of distress and helplessness.

“Throughout this pilot stage we’ve seen some very poignant examples of how the NHS Stressline has already helped people. Like the 49-year-old man who had just lost his job and felt unable to tell his wife, so continued to act as if he was going to work every day whilst secretly contemplating suicide. Or the 28-year-old woman who was stressed and anxious about her mounting debt due to a cut in her hours at work and felt she didn’t have anywhere to turn.

“In these cases, our trained health advisors listened and offered sympathetic, relevant support and advice that helped them both take control of their situation. Additionally, the lady was pointed to a service which could provide specific help with her finances and in the gentleman’s case, as with anyone feeling extremely distressed or suicidal, an NHS Direct nurse advisor was available for a further assessment.”

**Mind's Chief Executive Paul Farmer said:**

“Money worries and fears about job security have the potential to trigger mental health problems like depression and anxiety. When people are faced with piles of bills and deep emotional despair the future can seem bleak and it can be difficult to know where to turn for advice. We would encourage anyone experiencing these difficulties to contact the NHS Stressline for support and advice.”

## **Notes to editors**

### **About the NHS Stressline**

The NHS Stressline number is 0300 123 2000 and it is open daily from **8am-10pm**.

The stressline has been in a trial period since July 2009 and has already helped 1,000 people to get help. Over 150 people have been advised to access health services and over 50 per cent of callers have been signposted to information services for debt management, employment or housing.

### **Mental health stats**

- ? One in six people have a mental health condition.
- ? Mental Health costs the country £77 billion a year (£2,000 a second).
- ? 13 per cent of the NHS budget goes on mental health.

- ? Mental ill-health is the most common reason for claiming health-related benefits.
- ? The cost of lost employment because of ill mental health is approximately £26.1 billion.
- ? 8.65 million people in England have a mental health problem and this is set rise by over 1.2 million (14.2 per cent) by 2026 to 9.88 million.
- ? A Citizens Advice Bureau survey found that 62 per cent of clients reported stress, anxiety or depression in 2001. 48 per cent of these had not sought treatment from a GP because embarrassment (62 per cent), not knowing who to ask (45 per cent), or thinking that no one would be able to help (47 per cent).