

A photograph of two women walking through a modern, brightly lit interior space, possibly a shopping mall or office lobby. The woman in the foreground is seen from the back, wearing a light-colored, long-sleeved top and a long, pleated skirt with vertical stripes. The woman behind her is smiling and looking towards the camera; she has short, styled grey hair and is wearing a white, textured top and teal trousers. She is carrying a brown leather shoulder bag and a shopping bag. The background is blurred, showing glass railings and warm lighting.

Confident living

Managing your money

RNIB

Supporting people
with sight loss

Managing your money

Five top tips

- 1 Ask a shop what special offers they have.
- 2 Speak up for your rights, services should be made accessible to you.
- 3 Compare what you are paying for your gas and electricity with other suppliers and see if you can get a better deal.
- 4 If you are experiencing financial difficulties, contact the government's Money Advice Service.
- 5 Contact RNIB to make sure you are receiving all the benefits you are entitled to.

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Introduction

“Managing your money” means different things to different people. It might mean decisions on budgeting your weekly income to cover your outgoings, getting the best deals on purchases or services or maximising the interest on your savings.

The key to making informed decisions is having the information that you need in the format that you can read at the time you need it. People with sight loss can find it hard to get information in their preferred format from the banks, service providers or utility companies they already use – let alone get information about the services and deals that are available elsewhere.

This booklet provides basic information on your rights, what to consider and where to get expert advice and further information on topics that people with sight loss have asked us about.

This booklet gives general guidance only. It is not a complete and authoritative statement of the law.

Money Advice Service

If, after reading this booklet, you require more detailed information or advice on money matters, the “Money Advice Service”, a free and independent service set up by the government, may be able to help.

The Money Advice Service offers information on a range of subjects including:

- how to cope with changing circumstances, like a sudden drop in income
- getting the most out of your budget
- saving for a special event or a rainy day
- borrowing wisely
- understanding tax and welfare benefits.

When the Money Advice Service doesn't have the answers, it will help you to find them elsewhere. This will include signposting you to specialist advice on debt or pensions or to regulated financial advice.

Helpline: 0300 500 5000 (8am to 8pm, Monday to Friday; 9am to 1pm Saturday – calls charged at a local rate).

Website: [moneyadviceservice.org.uk](https://www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk)

Know your rights – and talk about them!

You have the right to receive information in a format that you can read. You have the right to be able to access services. Sight loss should not prevent you from making financial decisions, exercising choice or using financial services independently. If you are having difficulties, talk to your service provider. You have rights, they have legal obligations.

The Equality Act

The Equality Act (EA) is legislation which aims to prevent discrimination against people with disabilities. The EA covers different areas: employment, goods, services and facilities, transport, education and premises.

Banks, financial service providers and retailers must make their services accessible to you.

It might mean that they make a reasonable adjustment to ensure that someone with sight loss can access the service. For example, banks

and card issuers have a facility for customers with a disability to have a chip and signature card ([see page 16](#)) rather than a chip and PIN card if someone can't use PIN numbers.

This is just one example of the reasonable adjustments that banks and financial service providers make. If you are having difficulty talk to the service provider, explain what the problem is and ask them if there is another way that you can access the service.

If you believe that you have been denied access to information, or to a service, on the grounds of your sight loss please contact RNIB. Further information or help is available from our Helpline on **0303 123 9999** or email helpline@rnib.org.uk



Jean's story

“ I run a stall at the local club selling bric-a-brac to raise some money for the club. So many of the women I meet seem to want to have such small purses; ‘Can you look in my purse?’ they say to me. I always have a large oblong purse which has enough compartments that each coin can be in a compartment on its own and I always make sure all the coins and notes are in the right place before I leave the house.

And if I need cash I go to the bank and ask for it in £5 and £10 notes only. So I can separate them in my purse and use the lowest one suitable, and then I don't have to worry about people giving me the correct change! ”

Getting the most out of banking

The advantages of having a bank account

Banks and building societies provide different types of accounts and methods of banking which give customers flexibility in how they manage their money.

If you don't have a bank account or have always done your banking in a particular way, it might be worth considering whether or not you could get more from your current bank or could benefit from using a bank account. Basic bank accounts are available from most banks. You can receive money, set up direct debits or standing orders, withdraw cash and have a cash card. They usually do not allow you to go more than £10 overdrawn. Paying bills via direct debit can save you money and having the right kind of account to suit your needs can also save you money.

There are a number of reasons why people don't have bank accounts. Perhaps they simply have never had one or they are concerned that they

will become overdrawn. Some people prefer to pay for things by cash or they may have had a bad experience in the past with a bank. These concerns are understandable but, with advice from your bank or an independent organisation such as the Money Advice Service, you may find these concerns can be addressed.

The advantages of changing your bank

How long have you been with your bank or building society? Many people stick with one bank for a number of years. If you're happy with your bank that's great, why change? If you're not happy and don't think that you are getting the service or support that you need perhaps it is time to think about changing. Complain and then change!



You may also decide that it is worth changing banks to get better interest rates for accounts and mortgages. You can track interest rates by following information in the media, by contacting banks and financial service providers or through some websites such as [moneysavingexpert.com](https://www.moneysavingexpert.com)

It's good to talk

It is always worth discussing your thoughts with your bank first. Banks and building societies are developing new services and new ways of dealing with things all the time. As a longstanding customer you may not be aware of changes and your bank may not be aware that there are ways they can better help you.

Banks love new customers. If you are thinking about changing or want to see what services you could get from another bank, talk to them. You aren't committed to making any changes that you don't want to. If you find out that a particular bank offers a service that you are interested in, you could always go back to your bank and ask them if they also offer this.

Think about what works for you with your current bank. What doesn't work? What you'd like from a new bank? Ask questions, get straight answers and then make a decision.

The thought of switching bank accounts can be daunting; all of those arrangements that you have in place for receiving payments and for paying bills. You don't have to deal with any of this. Your new bank will sort out the details of any changes that have to be made.

Choosing how you bank

Traditionally people banked over the counter in a branch of their bank or building society. Everything from ordering a cheque book to paying in the coins that you'd saved in a jar was done face to face in your local high street. Nowadays banks and building societies give their customers more choice – choices that should also make banking easier for people with sight problems.

The good news is that you don't have to stick to one way of banking – you can pick and choose to suit you. You might prefer to go into the branch to discuss issues that concern you or to get advice, but if you want to know how much is in your account, or when a direct debit is due you can phone to find out. Managing your bank or building society account from home is often easier than travelling to your nearest branch.

There are a few banks and building societies that don't have high street branches and only offer

internet or telephone banking services. Most still provide customers with staff in a local branch to help them, as well as a telephone banking service and internet banking.

Telephone banking

To use telephone banking you don't necessarily have to use the telephone keypad to provide a long list of account numbers in order to get through to speak



to someone at your bank. You may be asked security questions to check that you are who you say you are, but beyond that everything else is done by talking to someone on the phone.

Internet banking

In order to use internet banking services you need to be able to use a computer. If you have a computer and access software why not give it a go? Banks and building societies should have websites that are accessible to blind and partially sighted people. Your bank will ensure that you either have a fully accessible way of accessing your account details or they will give you equipment to enable you to provide the required information to access your account.

Smartphone apps are an increasingly popular way of banking. If you would like to know more about the accessibility to people with sight problems of some of the more popular apps available we have a review of them on our website rnib.org.uk.

Post Offices

Many bank and building society accounts can be accessed through your local Post Office. Speak to your bank to find out what services you can access in this way. If you have a chip and signature card rather than a chip and PIN card you may find it more difficult to access your account. Contact your bank to find out what system they have in place to enable you to use the Post Office to withdraw money from your account.

ATMs

Because of the difficulties reading the information on the screen, traditionally very few people with sight loss have used cash machines. However there are now an increasing number of “talking” cash machines, specifically designed to help blind and partially sighted people.

You can use talking cash machines to take out cash, check your balance or change your PIN

number by using headphones to hear on-screen information. Contact our Helpline on **0303 123 9999** for more information about headphones.

You need to plug in a set of headphones to the audio jack and listen to the options that will be read out. You will be given several choices and asked to press the appropriate option on the key pad. For instance, you may be asked to press “one” to select cash withdrawal and “two” to select balance enquiry. On each key pad the “five” has a raised dot which enables you to navigate the numbers.

Ask your bank if they have any talking cash machines and if they do, where is the nearest one to you. If they don't, consider shopping around and finding a bank that does.

Identity security

When opening new accounts, using your account or using debit or credit cards you have to be able to prove that you are who say you are. Usually your account number and security password allow you to access your account over the counter, over the phone or on the internet. A PIN number or signature (with a chip and

signature card) will allow you to use a debit or credit card.

Banks and building societies understand that not everyone is able to use a PIN or has a passport or a driving licence. There are alternative forms of ID that can be used when opening an account and different ways of proving that you have the right to use it. If you are having difficulty, talk to your bank.

Chip and signature cards

The chip and PIN system is designed to cut down fraud by asking you to type a four-digit PIN number into a keypad, instead of signing a receipt. Banks and credit card issuers have recognised that using keypads may be difficult for some blind and partially sighted people. A chip and signature (or PIN-suppressed) card can be issued instead, enabling you to sign for your purchases.

If you find using a chip and PIN card difficult you should contact your bank or credit card company who are obliged, under the Equality Act, to make using a debit or credit card accessible to disabled people unable to use PIN numbers. They should provide you with a chip and signature card.

Utilities and other services

Any service that you buy may be found cheaper elsewhere. Switching suppliers may save you money and may be easier than you think.

Utility companies, phone companies, banks and many other service providers will, as a matter of course, organise your switch from your existing supplier to them. In many cases you won't need to do anything other than give them some basic details and tell them which company you currently use. Don't be put off shopping around and changing – you could save money!

Are you a priority customer?

Some service providers offer payment plans and packages designed to support customers with disabilities or who are in receipt of certain benefits. This might mean that if, for example, your electricity supply is cut off or there are problems with the phones in your area, you would be one of the first customers to have their service reinstated. It could also mean that you might be

eligible to have a customer package that entitles you to lower charges or discounted rates for services at different times.

It is worth contacting your service providers to find out what support they can offer you.

Saving money with direct debit

Did you know that how you pay for your utility bills could be costing you more? The tariffs (rate at which you are charged) might be lower if you pay by direct debit or the company may actually charge you a payment processing fee if you send them a cheque or make a cash transfer payment rather than pay your bill by direct debit.

If you don't currently pay bills by direct debit it might be worth considering it. Talk to your bank, particularly if you have concerns that setting up direct debits may take your account overdrawn. Your bank should be able to help you manage your account to prevent this.



The advantages of shopping around

Don't miss out on deals

Details of “Buy one get one free” offers in shops may not be fully accessible to people with sight problems. RNIB is working with retailers to make displays and information about the products more accessible. However, don't be afraid to ask in shops what special offers they have. Don't miss out, speak up!

You can also ask your utility and service providers a few questions about the service packages or payment terms that they offer customers. Prices can differ from company to company; they can also differ depending on how you pay and how you “signed up” for the service. In addition to contacting other suppliers to check out their prices and services, it is always worth looking at the services, rates and payment packages that are available from your current supplier. Ask them if it would be cheaper if you bought online or would it be cheaper if you paid by direct debit on a monthly basis, for example.

Comparison websites

Comparison websites can be very useful as they offer straight price comparisons on products and services. They often enable you to tailor your search by providing very specific information on your circumstances or details of the exact service that you require.

It is advisable to check that the list of providers or suppliers given on the website is comprehensive.

Are the names you expect to find featured?

The best websites to use are those accredited by Consumer Focus, the consumer protection organisation. The information that you receive will be unbiased and not based on the relationship that the comparison website has with the companies that they recommend.

It is also worth looking at product reviews or customer reviews on different websites and forums including online shopping sites.

Insurance

Do you need insurance? If you have it, do you have the right policy? Before buying insurance or reviewing the cover that you've got, there are a few things to consider. Is it suitable for your particular needs, is it competitively priced, when

does the policy pay out, what happens if you miss a payment, wish to cancel it or switch to another policy or company?

There are many types of insurance policies and insurance providers. It is worth seeking advice from an insurance adviser before buying, not least because they are required, by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) to only recommend policies that are suitable for you. If the advice you receive turns out to be unsuitable you have the right, under FCA rules, to complain and possibly receive compensation.

For more information on insurance contact the Money Advice Service on **0300 500 5000** or visit [moneyadviceservice.org.uk](https://www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk)

Exchange rates

Check out the best exchange rates for holiday cash by visiting comparison websites, by contacting your bank and the Post Office. Don't forget you may also need to change your holiday cash back to sterling, so look for a company that doesn't charge you for this service.



Benefits and tax allowances

Are you getting the benefits that you're entitled to? Do you know that additional funds may be available to assist you?

Rights and benefits advice

RNIB's Helpline provides advice and information on social security and other benefits, social services and sources of financial help. Call

0303 123 9999 or email helpline@rnib.org.uk

Online benefits advice including our benefits calculator is also available on our website at rnib.org.uk/benefits

Age UK offer advice on disability benefits for older people on **0800 169 6565**.

Grants and financial assistance

Contact RNIB's Helpline for advice about debts, benefits and concessions you may be entitled to, as well as details of other organisations who might be able to give you financial assistance.

Call **0303 123 9999** or email helpline@rnib.org.uk

Tax

Do you qualify for Blind Persons Tax Allowance?
Are you paying the right amount of tax, are you
using the right tax code?

RNIB has launched a new service with
HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) to support
blind and partially sighted people with tax and
benefit issues. For more information on our
Tax Advice Service call us on **0845 330 4897** or
email RNIBHMRC-project@rnib.org.uk



Other sources of advice

If you want to speak to someone about money there are plenty of places from which to get advice.

General advice

For general advice on money you can contact your local Citizens Advice Bureau. Call **0345 404 0506** to find the one closest to you.

Independent financial advice

If you need professional advice about managing your money – for example on investments, mortgages, life insurance – look for an independent financial adviser who will not be tied to a particular company and who is authorised through the Personal Investment Agency. Visit [unbiased.co.uk](https://www.unbiased.co.uk) to find an independent financial adviser near you.

If you have any complaints or queries, contact the Financial Conduct Authority consumer helpline on **0800 111 6768** (freephone).

Has your life changed?

There is help and advice available to you whenever you are facing life changes; whether through becoming a parent, unemployed, ill or retired for example. If your life has changed and you need advice on your financial situation, the help to which you may be entitled and where to get support contact the Money Advice Service on **0300 500 5000** or visit [moneyadviceservice.org.uk](https://www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk)

Advice on borrowing money

If you'd like to borrow money there are a number of different ways in which to do this. You could take out a personal loan, an overdraft, credit cards, store cards, a hire purchase agreement or could borrow money through other lenders.

It is always best to seek advice on which option suits you based on your circumstances and the amount of money you wish to borrow. For more information contact the Money Advice Service.

Similarly, if you have borrowed money and would like advice please contact the Money Advice Service.

If things go wrong

Debt management

If you are worried about debt, call the National Debtline on **0808 808 4000** or visit nationaldebtline.co.uk for free advice. The Step Change Debt Charity (formerly the Consumer Credit Counselling Service) can also provide a free debt management plan. Call free on **0800 138 1111**.

Where to complain

If things go wrong, or you feel that you've not received the treatment or service that you should have, it might be worth complaining. In the first instance you should complain to the service provider. If this doesn't resolve the problem it might be worth taking your complaint further.

The Financial Ombudsman Service

If you've gone through your bank or building society's complaints procedure and they haven't been able to help you, you can make a complaint to the Financial Ombudsman Service.

You must give your bank or building society at least eight weeks to sort the problem out, unless

they send you a “letter of deadlock” before the eight weeks is up. This is a letter telling you there nothing more they can do to help you.

You must complain to the Ombudsman within six months of getting the letter of deadlock, or from the end of the eight week period if you don't get a letter of deadlock. Make sure you keep a record of the date when you first made your complaint to the bank.

You can contact the Financial Ombudsman free of charge on **0800 023 4567** or visit financial-ombudsman.org.uk

Citizens Advice Consumer Service

The Citizens Advice Consumer Service provides free, confidential and impartial advice on consumer issues.

Call the Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline on **03454 04 05 06**. You can talk to a Welsh-speaking adviser on **03454 04 05 05**. The helplines are open Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm.

If you live in Northern Ireland, you can call the Consumerline on **0300 123 6262** or visit <http://consumerline.org/>

Equality Advisory Support Service (EASS)

The EASS Helpline advises and assists individuals on issues relating to equality and human rights, across England, Scotland and Wales.

For help or advice, contact freephone

0808 800 0082, textphone **0808 800 0084**

Monday to Friday 9am to 8pm and Saturday 10am to 2pm, or visit [equalityadvisoryservice.com](https://www.equalityadvisoryservice.com) for more information.



Keeping up to date

You may be interested in how to make your money go further, your consumer rights, which companies are offering good deals at the moment, how to plan for the future or how to follow the stock market. The following sources of information will help keep you up to date.

Which? magazine

Each issue of “**Which?**” is full of reports on everything that affects the quality of your life, from everyday purchases to one-off investments.

Which? helps you to get the very best deal available, whether you’re buying a car or choosing a credit card.

Radio 4 Money Box programme

A half-hour radio programme every Saturday at 12 noon offering advice and updates on what’s happening in the world of personal finance and consumer rights.

Online

There are a number of websites offering financial advice, providing comparison services and promoting financial products. Consumers are advised to “shop around” to look for information that is impartial.

Martin Lewis’ [moneysavingexpert.com](https://www.moneysavingexpert.com) is recognised as one of the best websites for information on a wide variety of financial topics including details of current special offers.



Further information

RNIB products to help you

RNIB sells a range of products to help you manage your money. Coin holders to help you store and quickly identify coins. Note detectors for both sterling and Euro notes, so you can be sure which note you are using. Signature guides to help you sign cheques and other documents in the correct place. Call the RNIB Helpline for more details.

Become a Member of RNIB

Join today for your free, nine-month trial membership, to meet other blind and partially sighted people, share your experiences and keep up to date with the latest news and special offers from RNIB. Become a member by calling **0303 1234 555** or emailing [**membership@rnib.org.uk**](mailto:membership@rnib.org.uk)

RNIB Helpline

Information, support and advice for anyone with a sight problem.

Telephone **0303 123 9999**

Email helpline@rnib.org.uk

Action for Blind People

Action for Blind People is a national charity with local reach. Providing practical help and support to blind and partially sighted people of all ages.

Telephone **0303 123 9999**

Email helpline@rnib.org.uk
actionforblindpeople.org.uk

Money Advice Service

Free service set up by the government to help people make the most of their money.

Telephone **0300 500 5000**

Email enquiries@moneyadviceservice.org.uk
moneyadviceservice.org.uk

National Debtline

Free, confidential and independent advice on how to deal with debt problems.

Telephone **0808 808 4000**

nationaldebtline.co.uk



We value your feedback

Please help us improve the information we supply by sharing your comments on this publication. Complete the form and return to:

FREEPOST RSCB-GJHJ-HLXG

RNIB Publishing, 105 Judd Street

London WC1H 9NE

(There is no need to use a stamp.)

Alternatively, you can email

publishing@rnib.org.uk

Please include your contact details if you request further information.

1. Where did you receive your copy of this leaflet?

2. Did you find that the information was presented in a way that was easy to read and easy to understand? Please give details of anything you feel could be improved.



3. Is there any information you would have found helpful, or were expecting to find, that was missing?

4. Further comments. Please use the space below for any other comments you have on the information in this leaflet or any aspect of your contact with RNIB.

About the Confident living series

The **Confident living series** is for people who are losing or have recently lost their sight and are trying to build their confidence to continue to lead full and independent lives. Titles in the series are:

- Leisure
- Living safely
- Reading
- Shopping
- Technology
- Travel

All these leaflets are available in audio, print and braille formats. To order please contact our Helpline on **0303 123 9999** (all calls charged at local rate), email helpline@rnib.org.uk.

If you or someone you know is living with sight loss, we're here to help.

**If you, or someone you know, is living
with sight loss, we're here to help.**

RNIB Helpline

0303 123 999

helpline@rnib.org.uk

Ask RNIB is the simple, easy to use way
to find the answers to your questions
online – try it today at rnib.org.uk/ask

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