



**Torrige, North,
Mid & West Devon**

Here's a common cry...

"This time of year is always so expensive with presents to buy and heating bills going up. I've seen offers for 'Buy Now Pay Later' when I'm shopping online which seems like a good way to spread costs but how do I make sure I don't get into debt?"

Everything is getting more expensive and it's a really difficult time for a lot of people so it's sensible to be thinking how to manage. There are lots of things you can do to try and stay in control of your money.

Before you start spending, work out exactly what money you have coming in and going out each month. Be realistic about what you need for essentials like food and travel. This link takes you to a budgeting tool on the Citizens Advice website which can help. <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/debt-and-money/budgeting/budgeting/work-out-your-budget/> You can also find tips on how to reduce your regular living costs <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/debt-and-money/help-with-debt/dealing-with-your-debts/reducing-your-regular-living-costs/>

Buy Now Pay Later (BNPL) schemes look tempting but the money does still need to be repaid so keep a record of how much you owe in total. Always make sure you understand what you are signing up for, how you'll make the repayments and what will happen if you can't pay on time. It's also important to check the returns process for both the retailer and the credit provider. Paying through BNPL may also affect the cost of postage returns if you've ordered online. The riskiest thing about it is that you're not guaranteed to be protected if something goes wrong so for example, you can't go to the Financial Ombudsman if you have a complaint.

Always prioritise your priority bills and essentials, (rent/mortgage, energy bills, Council Tax, food and travel). At Citizens Advice Torrige, North, Mid & West Devon we have a specialist team offering advice on managing money and debt. You can ring our **free, local AdviceLine on 0808 27 87 999** or visit our website on www.ruraldevon.cab.org.uk and click on 'Get Advice.' Alternatively there is our national debt helpline available on 0800 240 4420.

As you can imagine, demand for our services is increasing all the time and we foresee that it will continue to do so. We are constantly looking for people to come and volunteer with us, to get training and support to enable them to help us to help people in the community. It doesn't necessarily have to be advising people with their problems, there are many other opportunities to be had with us. For more information contact recruitment@ruraldevoncab.org.uk and see if it is something that you could add to your planned activities in the New Year!