

# Financial conversation guide

## Steps to follow

Use this guide to find out if a carer has money worries, to listen to their concerns and to set them on the most productive path forward that is possible.

Click on the **orange question marks** to see some useful example phrases.

### Red flags identified during conversation



<i>Red flag</i>	<i>Some examples</i>
<i>Fears and worries related to being short of money</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Insecure housing</li> <li>● Unpaid bills</li> <li>● Debts and/or debt collectors</li> </ul>
<i>Trouble with Centrelink</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Accessing Carer Payment, Carer Allowance or Disability Support Payment</li> <li>● Ineligible due to visa status</li> </ul>
<i>Inadequate financial supports for care recipient</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Carer sacrificing respite from My Aged Care package to save for a wheelchair</li> <li>● High non-PBS medication costs</li> <li>● Unable to access therapeutic treatments – e.g. physiotherapist or speech pathologist</li> <li>● Unable to purchase equipment for children where NDIS funding may be insufficient</li> <li>● Care recipient is not eligible for NDIS or My Aged Care due to visa status</li> </ul>
<i>Change in caring circumstances</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● New to caring</li> <li>● Reduced work</li> <li>● No longer in a caring role</li> </ul>

If you have identified financial hardship:

If managing well and keen to learn more:

Immediate relief for financial need

Carer Pathway to financial counselling

Financial counselling for care recipient

Build carer's financial capability

## If you have identified financial hardship

### Immediate relief for financial need



If the carer requires immediate or emergency funds, you can help with:

- Emergency relief provided by your organisation
- A referral to community organizations that can provide a supermarket voucher or food parcels

**NOTE:** Many providers will not have direct emergency relief and will need to refer on.

### Carer Pathway to financial counselling



If the carer is facing debt or other money trouble, they may benefit from speaking to a financial counsellor (please note this pathway is for people over 18 years of age only).

#### Carer Pathway

We are trialling a new carer-specific referral to financial counselling through the National Debt Helpline (NDH) –

The Carer Pathway is designed to –

- Make it easier for carers to set up contact with a financial counsellor
- Understand that carers are busy people who cannot always be available to speak on the phone about their personal matters
- Help carers access assistance as early as possible
- Give carers choice about which agency they work with over the longer term (if needed)

Once NDH has received the referral, they can provide some immediate assistance and can refer the carer on to an agency of their choice if further assistance will be helpful.

Carer Pathway  
NDH webpage

'Carer Pathway to financial  
counselling' factsheet for carer

### Financial counselling assistance for care recipient



It may be beneficial for the care recipient to seek financial counselling, particularly if the issue is:

- Not enough money to meet the needs of the person receiving care
- The person receiving care is having difficulty managing their money

**NOTE:** It is important for the carer and care recipient to have their own independent assistance.

**NOTE:** Carer may be able to assist if the care recipient consents to that or if they have a Power of Attorney (financial or supportive)

'Get in touch with a financial counsellor' factsheet  
for care recipient

## Build carer's financial capability



If the carer has money problems but few debts, or is managing well at the moment but may be in a precarious position, they may benefit from one of the financial capability programs offered in Victoria.

'Build your financial capability'  
factsheet

# Financial conversation guide

## *Useful phrases for reference*

### **Red flags identified during conversation**

#### *Conversation starters:*

- A lot of carers we hear from will say they find it tough financially and feel financially disadvantaged.
- Some carers aren't able to work as much or they use their money to buy things for the person they care for, or their Centrelink payment just doesn't cover everything.
- We know that many carers find money a stress and their caring role has an impact on finances.
- We talk to all carers about finances as part of our assessment, is it ok if I ask you a few questions? It is your choice how much you would like to disclose.
- It's not about knowing how much money you have, rather making sure you're accessing all the help that's available to you.
- These conversations are confidential and won't be shared with anyone, including Centrelink.

#### *Gentle questions to explore directly:*

- Do you ever have difficulty keeping up with rent or mortgage repayments?
- Do you ever have difficulty paying bills on time?
- Do you have any problematic debts? Are you being pursued by a debt collector?
- Are you in paid work at the moment? Have your work hours changed recently?
- Do you have any unpaid fines?
- Do you ever find you don't have enough money for day-to-day stuff – food, clothing, petrol?
- Are you receiving a Centrelink payment or allowance?
- Does the person you care for have NDIS or My Aged Care?
- You mentioned before that XXX [e.g. Samira's medication costs you a lot] – could you tell me a bit more about it?

[Go back to steps](#)

## If you have identified financial hardship

### Immediate relief for financial need

NOTE: Many providers will not have direct emergency relief and will need to refer on.

- I can hear that you have some very immediate and pressing worries and I believe we can help you with a little short-term assistance just to keep you going – and to buy you time to get in a stronger financial position
- I'm able to provide some emergency relief today (e.g. vouchers) – but it's not something that we are able to help with all the time.
- There are some community organizations who can give you a supermarket voucher or food parcels to ease the pressure. They are often short term and limited to every few months. Would you like me to give you their details – or I could set up an appointment for you?

[Go back to steps](#)

### Carer Pathway to financial counselling

- Given the kind of money trouble you are facing, it may be helpful to talk to a financial counsellor

#### *Have you spoken with a financial counsellor before? How did it go?*

- A financial counsellor can help you deal with debts and other money pressures – they know a lot of options you may not be aware of; options that can help you get your finances back on track or perhaps relieve some financial pressure
- Financial counsellors are trained professionals who will work with you as an individual – listen to your concerns and help you understand what options are available to you
- Their assistance is always free and confidential – no one will know what you talk about
- They are completely independent, and help you to figure out what you want to do – they do not judge your situation or your choices

#### *Carer Pathway to financial counselling*

- We are trialling a new carer pathway to financial counselling through the National Debt Helpline (NDH) –
- The way it works –
  - With your consent, I can fill in the form for you now
  - The National Debt Helpline will email you a receipt
  - They will contact you by phone in the next few days, respecting the times you have indicated you are not available to talk about your personal finances
  - NDH can provide some immediate assistance and can refer you on to an agency of your choice if you would like more help

### *Would you like to try our new Carer Pathway to financial counselling?*

- If no or not now, I need to think about it:
  - That's fine – would you like me to email a factsheet with details about the referral pathway and you can do it yourself when you're ready?
- About the Carer Pathway...
  - Makes it easier for you to set up contact with a financial counsellor
  - Helps you access assistance as early as possible
  - Gives you choice about which agency you work with over the longer term (if needed)
  - Understands that carers are busy people who cannot always be available to speak on the phone about their personal matters

[Go back to steps](#)

### *Financial counselling assistance for care recipient*

**NOTE:** It can help a carer to view their financial circumstances separately to those of the person they care for. Financial counsellors assist individuals without conflict.

- OK, so it sounds like you have some issues with –
  - Not enough money to meet the needs of the person you care for
  - The person you care for is having difficulty managing their money
- It is important for the person you care for to have their own independent assistance – and this helps you to understand your own financial situation independently as well
- Would you like me to email you a factsheet about how the person you care for can access their own independent financial counselling assistance?
- You may be able to assist, if the person you care for consents to that or if you have a Power of Attorney (financial or supportive)

[Go back to steps](#)

## Build carer's financial capability

- Building financial capability means having the knowledge and confidence you need to make good financial decisions
- I understand there are no easy answers – sometimes there is simply not enough money to manage everything – but it may help to learn a few extra skills
- Some people find it helpful to know what financial capability programs and resources are available to help them keep their finances on track
- There are many options to choose from. Would you like me to email you a guide that helps you decide which program is right for you?

OR

- It sounds like you've been managing things pretty well –
- Some people find it helpful to know what financial capability programs and resources are available to help them keep their finances on track
- There are many options to choose from. Would you like me to email you a guide that helps you decide which program is right for you?

[Go back to steps](#)

## Closing remarks

- We know that getting the Carer Payment/Carer Allowance is hard, and if you get it, it's often not enough
- If your finances ever change and you'd like to speak to someone about it, you're welcome to reconnect with us or any of the services we've talked about today

[Go back to start](#)

Financial Counselling for  
Carers is supported by the  
Victorian Government

