

Guide: Talking to children about money problems



Talking to children about money problems can help reduce anxiety and teach valuable life skills for the future.

This is a sensitive area and you'll know what feels right for your family. If you decide to talk to your children about money problems, here are some ideas that could help, developed by QSA staff with extensive experience in supporting parents to have conversations about money.

Many people are undergoing serious hardship with money, through absolutely no fault of their own. In lots of families this means that there isn't enough money for the essentials.

Children notice things and pick up on problems, so explaining a basic version of what is going on, in an age-appropriate way, can reduce their anxiety about things they may have noticed. It can also soothe any fears that it may somehow be their fault.

Starting a conversation about money with children

Many of us have grown up with the idea that you protect children from worries by not telling them about difficult things. This can make it feel hard to talk about money as a parent.

Try to remember that children learn by example and watching you cope with hard times (by supporting each other, facing problems, getting help, and talking honestly about worries) can teach them valuable skills for handling hard times in their own lives.

Finding a balance between not burdening children with worries while still talking about problems together can feel hard. But it can be helpful for children to have a clear explanation of what is going on and the chance to express their thoughts and feelings about it.

Here are some tips for talking with children about money worries:

- Choose a time when everyone is calm so that they can take in what you are saying and think about their response.
- Acknowledge how you feel and also their feelings, let them tell you how they feel too.
- Don't go into too much detail, especially for younger children.
- Be clear that any problems are not their fault.
- Let them know they can talk more later, if they want to. They might find several short conversations more helpful than one long one.

Getting support from others

If you think you'll find this hard, try talking it over with someone else. Plan what you are going to say, what words and how much detail you use. Think about what support might help you.

It might also help to:

- Remind yourself and your child that you are not on your own - talk about support available e.g. friends, family, school, neighbours, services and community organisations e.g. churches, mosques and youth clubs
- Remember to take care of yourself - remind yourself that it's difficult being a parent when it isn't in your power to make something important okay.
- Many of us will have feelings about not having enough money, like shame, or guilt. If you are struggling that doesn't mean you've handled things badly. And if you've made mistakes, it's important to remember that we all make mistakes and that these can be opportunities to learn.

Reassuring your children

Spending good time together doing everyday things you all enjoy will help your children feel involved and empowered. They can be reassured by knowing they can help in very ordinary ways, and that you're still there to take care of them.

You could do this by:

- Planning and cooking a meal together – it doesn't have to be anything fancy.
- Try picking a regular time (e.g. bedtime/before meals) and share things, moments or people you are grateful for, from your day.
- Doing something small together to help someone else.
- Remember that times are hard due to national and global factors that have pushed up the cost of living significantly.

Support with benefits, food and debt

- Stepchange offers free debt advice: [stepchange.org](https://www.stepchange.org)
- Turn2Us can help you find out what benefits or grants you are entitled to: [turn2us.org.uk](https://www.turn2us.org.uk) (phoneline: 0808 802 2000)
- Food Aid Network can help you find free or cheap food in your community: [foodaidnetwork.org.uk](https://www.foodaidnetwork.org.uk)
- We put together some tips for making the most of your money: [quakersocialaction.org.uk/moneytips](https://www.quakersocialaction.org.uk/moneytips)
- If you need someone to talk to, you can call Samaritans at anytime for free on 116 123

