

# Mortgage arrears: get time to sell

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Seek advice as soon as possible if you're struggling to pay your mortgage and your lender is threatening repossession. It's never too late to negotiate for more time to pay arrears, a payment holiday, or an assisted voluntary sale.

## Don't just hand back the keys

You'll still be responsible for the mortgage payments, plus other bills like council tax and water charges. If you need to apply to the council as homeless, they might decide you made yourself [intentionally homeless](#).

## Get help with debt and money problems

Even if your lender has already started legal action to repossess your home, [get advice as soon as possible](#). A debt adviser can look at your financial problems and negotiate with your lender for more time to deal with your situation.

## Ask your lender to help you find a solution

Your lender must treat you fairly. They should help find a solution to your [payment problems](#) and only take you to court as a last resort. Each lender has their rules and procedures for dealing with someone who is having difficulty paying their mortgage.

The range of support available might include:

- allowing you up to 12 months to sell your home privately
- reducing mortgage payments and stopping repossession while you are trying to sell
- reimbursing or covering solicitor and/or estate agent fees
- providing deposit and rent in advance for alternative private renting housing

There may be other options available for dealing with your mortgage arrears. Check whether your lender will add extra charges for any option that you are considering.

If you think your lender did not treat you fairly, you can complain to the [Financial Ombudsman Service](#). Your lender should put court action on hold while the Ombudsman deals with your case.

## Factsheet

### Ask your landlord for payment holidays and voluntary sale

If your difficulties are due to a temporary change of circumstance, such as a redundancy or maternity leave, you might be able to agree with your lender to temporarily [stop or reduce your monthly repayments](#).

Check if your lender offers [assisted voluntary sale](#). Under this scheme, you can stay in your home until it's sold. Some lenders may suspend arrears charges until the sale. If your home sells for less than the mortgage, they may write off some of the shortfall.

### Ask the court for time to sell

If your lender is taking legal action, you can ask the court for time to sell your property instead of granting possession. Courts are more likely to agree if you can show that you have already received a firm offer for the property.

### Apply for a debt respite scheme

If you need more time to get advice, you may be able to apply for a [breathing space](#). If you qualify, your lender cannot take legal action against you for 60 days.

If you are receiving crisis treatment from a specialist mental health service, you may qualify for a [mental health breathing space](#). This stops all your creditors from taking action against you, including your lender. The moratorium can last for as long as you receive mental health crisis treatment and ends 30 days after the treatment finishes.

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You can get further advice from [england.shelter.org.uk/housing\\_advice](https://www.england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice), a local Shelter advice service or local Citizens Advice.

If you have nowhere to sleep tonight, are at risk of harm or losing your home within the next 2 months, call Shelter Helpline on 0808 800 4444 for advice and information on your options. Calls are free from UK landlines and main mobile networks.

