

WORRIED ABOUT MORTGAGE ARREARS?

You might think it will never happen to you, but it's easy to get into mortgage arrears if your situation changes or the unexpected happens. You might experience a temporary setback or a long-term change in your circumstances, but it doesn't always mean that you're going to lose your home. There are supports out there to provide advice and practical support - even if you're facing the threat of repossession.

It is crucial that you don't ignore the problem of mortgage arrears. When letters from creditors or solicitors begin to arrive in the door, it's a very natural response to bury your head in the sand in the hope that the problem will go away. A report from the Central Bank has found that for borrowers who engage with their lender in a mortgage arrears resolution process (MARP), both regulated and unregulated lenders continue to put in place arrangements for borrowers and existing arrangements are honoured.

Shame, stress and isolation are barriers to people coming forward and engaging in these processes. However, the sooner you seek professional help, the better, not only for your financial situation but your physical and mental health too.

Who is there to help?

Abhaile is a state-funded mortgage arrears support service that works to help homeowners find the best solutions to their home mortgage arrears and, where possible, to keep them in their own homes. The financial and legal services provided by Abhaile are free of charge. To qualify, you must meet all four of these conditions:

- Be in mortgage arrears on your home.
- Be insolvent. This means that you are unable to pay your debts in full as they fall due.
- Be at risk of losing your home because of your home mortgage arrears.
- Be reasonably accommodated, i.e. the costs of continuing to live in your home are not disproportionately expensive.

MABS or your PIP will be able to tell you whether you meet these conditions.

Financial Services

Financial advice is provided through a MABS Dedicated Mortgage Arrears Adviser (DMA), a Personal Insolvency Practitioner (PIP)* or an Accountant, should your case require one. The dedicated adviser will work with you and your lender to find the best solution for you and your situation.

Legal Services

The legal services available to you are a Consultation Solicitor and a Personal Insolvency Court Review Service. The Review Service is only available if you have already worked with a PIP and have had a Personal Insolvency Arrangement (PIA) to your creditors rejected.

Pre COVID-19, a MABS Court Mentor and a Duty Solicitor would have been present at the court to provide support. However, due to social distancing measures and the current guidelines, they may not be present. If you have a court date, you should contact the MABS Helpline before you attend. Find their contact details at the bottom of this article.

Remember, you are not alone

To date, Abhaile has helped over 11,600 people. The key message for those in arrears is that *“it is never too late to seek advice”*. No matter how bad the situation appears, a positive outcome can be achieved.

If you are in mortgage arrears and fear you are at risk of losing your home, you may be eligible for assistance under the Abhaile service. For information, visit www.mabs.ie/en/abhaile/ or call the MABS dedicated helpline on 0761 07 2000.

** Personal Insolvency Practitioners are regulated by the Insolvency Service of Ireland*