

YWCA



# Girls just wanna have funds

## Money management for young women from disadvantaged backgrounds

For some young women, each day is a struggle.

About one million young women live in poverty in Great Britain, almost twice as many as young men. Their poverty can be a result of many factors.

YWCA works with them to help them manage their money, get hold of safe financial products and avoid those which are irresponsible, and keep them safe from exploitation and abuse.

Young women are vulnerable to being targeted by loan sharks, store cards and catalogue companies.

YWCA's range of innovative programmes help young women to manage their money.

Young women from disadvantaged backgrounds often struggle financially because they are on low incomes and may lack the skills to manage limited budgets. Care leavers, young mums and girls who have to leave unhappy homes can find themselves suddenly living independently with no support. They have to be responsible for a range of household bills and payments which they have no experience of. This makes them vulnerable to debt and financial problems.

Young women, especially those living in areas from which high-street banks have withdrawn, are easy targets for irresponsible lenders who encourage them to take out loans they cannot pay off or which have overly high interest rates. Loan sharks, store cards and catalogue companies can seem like attractive solutions to immediate money problems for many girls.

Young women who are financially dependent on men can be at risk of financial abuse: which is having money denied to you or only being given it in return for something else. The Home Office defines financial abuse as a form of domestic abuse.

Girls and young women need accessible, high quality advice about

money and debt from people they trust. Many have to wait a long time for debt advice and while they're waiting their financial problems worsen.

### YWCA's work

We offer an alternative curriculum. We treat each young woman as a whole and help her tackle whatever range of problems she has in her life, for example substance misuse or domestic violence. This approach means we offer programmes which help build assertiveness, confidence communication skills.

Our programmes run in places which are only for women; safe environments in which girls and women can express themselves freely, overcome shyness, develop their own identities and gain peer support. Working in this way helps girls challenge gender stereotypical assumptions and behaviour. Our programmes take place in informal, non-classroom settings and are complemented by useful, fun and relevant activities to practice the skills they've learned. We use games and activities to help the young women learn more about money and financial skills. Our crèches encourage women with children to attend.



# YWCA

YWCA teaches young women about bills, receipts and bank statements, what interest is, financial services and loans, and how not to get ripped off



Some young women find it hard to get the services they need. We help them to do this. Through our innovative range of work we support young women to manage their money and avoid more debt.

Here are just a few of the activities we do:

### Numeracy

We play a card game with women with limited numeracy and who have children in the crèche. By matching up cards featuring numbers and pictures, mums become familiar with numbers and it encourages them to play with their children.

### Budgeting and practical skills

Women are given the task of making their own shopping bag. They're given a small budget and design it, buy the fabric, and use patterns and measurements to make the bag. This practical activity teaches simple money skills as well as estimating, measuring and calculation. The bag is a product the woman can use and will remind her of what she's learned.

### Healthy eating on a budget

The majority of the girls and women we work with live on very little money

and find it hard to eat healthily. Some go without fresh food, others buy processed food and eat badly. Our healthy eating programmes encourage women to plan a weekly menu and buy ingredients within a budget. They practice making meals, measuring ingredients, estimating quantities and cooking times.



### Women with learning difficulties

YWCA Doncaster runs a support programme for young women with learning difficulties. These women are at particular risk of getting into financial problems because they can find it harder to read, recognise coins, understand bills or spot untrustworthy people. YWCA's basic skills courses encourage money awareness so they don't get ripped off. They learn about bills, receipts and bank statements, what interest is, financial services and loans, and learn about financial risks.

### Helping each other

At YWCA West Kent our money management programme helps women with money skills and is run alongside literacy and numeracy courses. At first, the girls doing the programme needed one-to-one discussions with a youth worker because they felt ashamed of their poverty. Once they had joined our support group they decided to make a DVD to tell other girls that they are not alone - many young women go through the same thing. They told their stories confidently on camera and shared what they had learned.

### Developing programmes

Girls at YWCA Dagenham wrote an application for funding from the Youth Opportunity Fund and Youth Capital Fund for a programme they wanted to run. YWCA helped the women build their confidence, work in a group and overcome any problems as they wrote their bids and estimated how much they needed. The applications were successful and they received funding to run their programme.

Now the young women can create this new programme themselves which will help build their confidence, numeracy and organisational skills at the same time. They feel a real responsibility to make their programme work within the budget.

Through innovative programmes like these, YWCA continues to support girls and young women and raise awareness of their money and debt problems.



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YWCA is the leading charity working with the most disadvantaged girls and young women in England and Wales. YWCA is a registered charity.

Photos: Jules Selmes and Jane Tomlinson

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