



Practical Resources for Care Workers

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Variable Income Budgeting Worksheet:

The Three-Pot System

What is it?

A flexible budgeting approach specifically designed for care workers with variable income. Rather than setting fixed amounts, you'll work with percentages that adjust based on what you earn each pay period.

STEP ONE: Calculate Your Income Range

My typical monthly income range:

Lowest month: £

Average month: £

Highest month: £

My baseline essential expenses: £

(This is the minimum amount you need for absolute essentials)

STEP TWO: Set Up Your Three Pots

POT 1: ESSENTIALS (50-60% of income)

Essential Expense	Typical Amount	Priority Level (1-3)
Rent/Mortgage		
Utilities		
Food		
Transport/Car		
Phone		
Insurance		
Childcare		
Minimum Debt Payments		
Other:		
Other		
Total:		

POT 2: FINANCIAL SECURITY (20-30% of income)

This builds your safety net and future financial stability.

Security Item	Percentage Allocation	Estimated Amount
Emergency Fund		
Car Maintenance Fund		
Debt Repayments		
Savings for Specific Goals		
Pension Contributions		
Other		
Total:		

NOTES: E

POT 3: LIFE QUALITY (10-20% of income)

These are the expenses that make life enjoyable and support your wellbeing.

Life Quality Item	Percentage Allocation	Estimated Amount
Entertainment		
Eating Out		
Hobbies		
Personal Care		
Gifts		
Other		
Total:		

NOTES:

STEP 3: Create Your Percentage Plan

Income Level	POT 1: Essentials	POT 2: Financial Security	POT 3: Life Quality
Low Month	70%	20%	10%
Average Month	60%	25%	15%
High Month	50%	30%	20%

Note:
Adjust these percentages based on your personal situation and priorities.

STEP 4: Income Soothing Plan

In higher-income periods I will :

Ensure all Pot 1 (Essentials) expenses are covered

- Allocate extra to :
- Save specifically for:

In lower-income periods, I will:

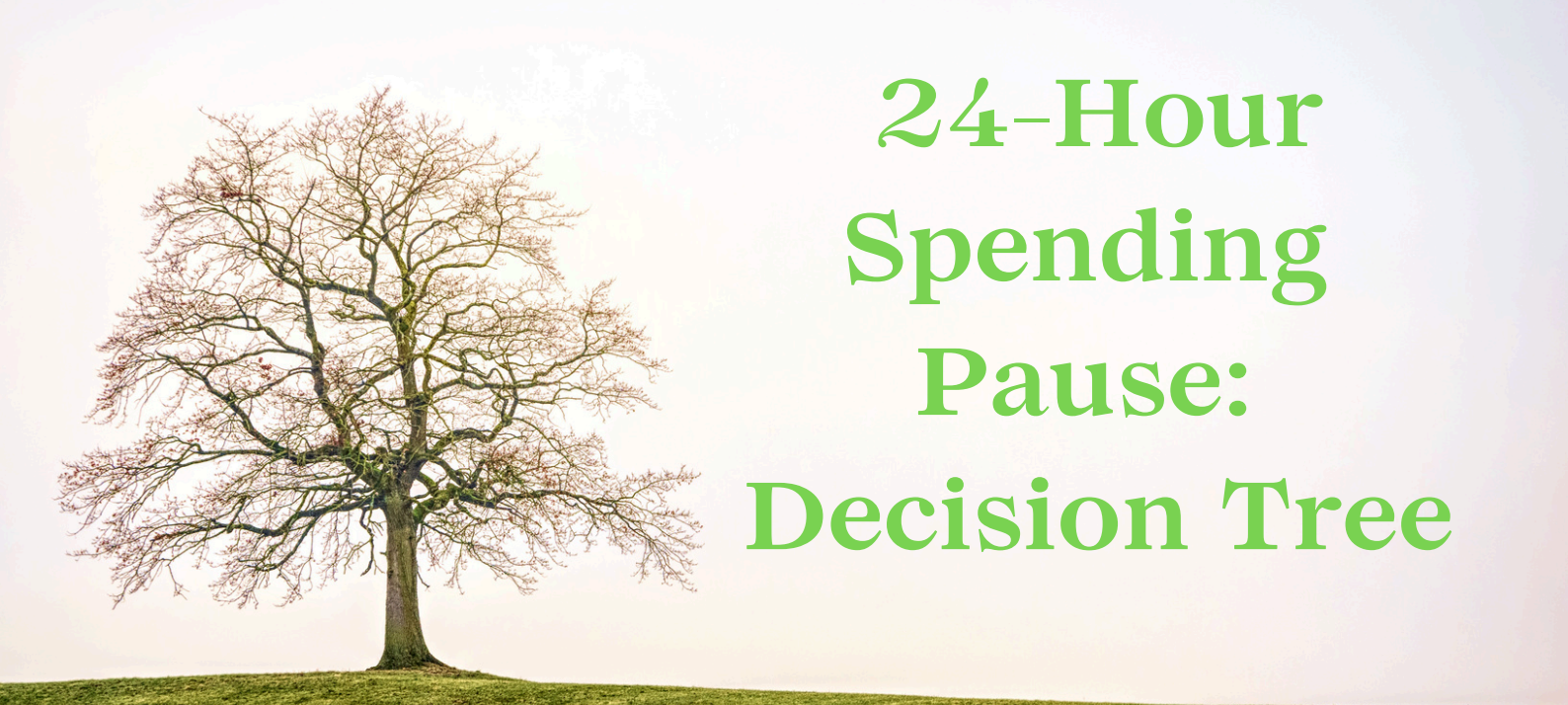
Focus on Priority Level 1 expenses first

- Reduce these Pot 3 expenses:
- Draw from my income smoothing fund if needed

Tips for Care Workers with Variable Income:

- Base your plan on your lowest income month to ensure essentials are always covered.
- Pay yourself first – when income arrives, immediately transfer your Pot 2 percentage before spending on anything else.
- Use a separate account for income smoothing to help balance your higher and lower earning periods.
- Review and adjust your percentages quarterly as your income patterns and expenses change.
- For very irregular income: Consider budgeting weekly rather than monthly.
- Track your actual spending percentages to see if they match your planned percentages.

The Three-Pot System isn't about restricting your spending—it's about prioritising what matters most to you.



24-Hour Spending Pause: Decision Tree

What is it?

The 24-Hour Spending Pause is a simple technique to help you make more intentional purchasing decisions.

For non-essential purchases (especially those over £20), wait 24 hours before buying.

How to use this decision tree:

- When you feel the urge to purchase something non-essential, **PAUSE**
- Ask yourself the questions below
- Wait 24 hours before making your decision
- Return to the item and go through the decision tree again

The Decision Tree

1. Value Assessment

- How many work hours will this purchase cost me?

(Divide cost by your hourly wage)

- Is this item worth that many hours of my labour?
 - If **NO** → Don't purchase
 - If **YES** → Continue to question 2

2. Financial Priority Check

- Does this purchase align with my current financial goals?
- Will buying this delay something more important to me?
- - If it **DELAYS** more important goals → Don't purchase
 - If it **ALIGNS** with my goals or won't impact them → Continue to question 3

3. Alternatives Evaluation

- Is there a less expensive alternative that would serve the same purpose?
- Could I borrow, rent, or find this second-hand instead?
- If **YES** to either → Explore that option first
- If **NO** → Continue to question 4

4. Timing Consideration

- Is this something I need/want right now, or can it wait?
- Is this likely to go on sale soon?
- If it **CAN WAIT** → Delay purchase and save specifically for it
- If **NEEDED SOON** → Continue to question 5

5. Future Impact

- How will I feel about this purchase in:
 - One week?
 - One month?
 - Six months?
- Will I still be using/enjoying this item in six months?
- If **UNLIKELY** to have lasting value → Don't purchase
- If **LIKELY** to have lasting value → Consider purchasing

Common Emotional Spending Triggers for Care Workers:

- Stress after a difficult shift
- Exhaustion leading to convenience purchases
- Reward-seeking after emotionally draining work
- Social pressure or comparison
- Before making the purchase, identify if any of these triggers are influencing your decision.

Remember: This isn't about never treating yourself. It's about making sure your purchases are intentional choices that align with what really matters to you.

Is this purchase taking me closer to or further from my financial goals?

Weekly Money Check-In Template

What is it?

A 15-minute routine to prevent financial surprises and maintain awareness of your financial situation.

Complete this check-in at the same time each week.

WEEKLY MONEY CHECK-IN: DATE

1. INCOME REVIEW

INCOME RECEIVED THIS WEEK:

EXPECTED INCOME NEXT WEEK:

ANY SCHEDULE CHANGES AFFECTING UPCOMING INCOME?

2. EXPENSE TRACKING

ESSENTIAL EXPENSES PAID THIS WEEK:

NON-ESSENTIAL SPENDING THIS WEEK:

DID I STAY WITHIN MY PLANNED SPENDING? YES ☐ NO ☐

3. UPCOMING PAYMENTS

Bill Amount	Due Date	Payment Method	Status

4. UPCOMING EXPENSES

ANY IRREGULAR OR UNEXPECTED EXPENSES COMING SOON?

ESTIMATED AMOUNT NEEDED:

DO I HAVE FUNDS AVAILABLE FOR THIS? YES ☐ NO ☐

IF NO, WHAT'S MY PLAN?

5. SAVINGS CHECK

CURRENT EMERGENCY FUND BALANCE:

AMOUNT ADDED TO SAVINGS THIS WEEK:

6. GOAL PROGRESS

TOP FINANCIAL GOAL:

PROGRESS MADE THIS WEEK:

NEXT STEP TOWARD THIS GOAL: _

7. WEEKLY REFLECTION

WHAT WENT WELL FINANCIALLY THIS WEEK?

WHAT FINANCIAL CHALLENGE DID I FACE?

ONE THING I CAN IMPROVE NEXT WEEK:

TIPS FOR CARE WORKERS WITH VARIABLE INCOME:

- FOCUS ON WEEKLY RATHER THAN MONTHLY TRACKING IF YOUR HOURS FLUCTUATE
- NOTE PATTERNS IN YOUR INCOME (WHICH WEEKS TEND TO BE HIGHER/LOWER)
- PLAN ESSENTIAL PAYMENTS FOR WEEKS YOU TYPICALLY HAVE MORE SHIFTS
- SAVE A PERCENTAGE OF HIGHER-INCOME WEEKS TO SUPPLEMENT LOWER-INCOME WEEKS

WEEKLY MONEY CHECK-IN HABIT BUILDING:

- SET A RECURRING CALENDAR REMINDER FOR YOUR CHECK-IN
- KEEP THIS TEMPLATE WITH YOUR SCHEDULE/DIARY
- COMPLETE EVEN DURING BUSY WEEKS - SHORTER IS BETTER THAN SKIPPED
- CELEBRATE COMPLETING YOUR CHECK-IN AS A WIN (IT IS!)

REGULAR ATTENTION CREATES FINANCIAL AWARENESS, AND
AWARENESS NATURALLY LEADS TO BETTER DECISIONS.