

# Refresh your FINANCES

Now that Ramadan and the period for fasting and reflection is over you may be looking to the future with a fresh perspective. Whether you plan to take part in Hajj or you're forward planning for Diwali – why not also take the time to apply your fresh new outlook to your finances.

Desi-info spoke to the Financial Ombudsman Service – the free service set up by law to sort out problems between consumers and financial businesses, for their top tips on freshening up your finances.

## Cut out the Clutter

You wouldn't pay twice to buy the same item in a shop, so make sure you're not doing it with your finances. Check what you're covered for under your policies, for example some people will not need separate mobile phone insurance as it is already covered by their home and contents policy or as part of their bank account. Check any exclusions that apply to your policy and if you decide that the policy is not suitable for your needs, shop around for one that is.

## Mystery payments

Ask your bank for a list of your regular payments and keep an eye on your statements. If you're paying for things you don't recognise or use, cancel them. Remember to speak to the business you've been paying to explain that you're cancelling the payment.

## Cost-effective Credit

If you're treating yourself to a new three piece suite, or giving your home a makeover, you might be considering an interest-free credit deal. These allow you to spread the cost of the purchase for an extended period without paying interest – sometimes for the first few years. If you sign up, make sure you pay off the agreement before the interest kicks in as repayments after this date can be expensive.

## plan ahead

From paying a little extra in to your work pension, to taking out life insurance to protect your family and loved ones, investing in the future can give you some peace of mind should life throw up any unexpected surprises. But, make sure you know how these products work. Some life policies are 'reviewable' which means the premiums can go up steeply in later years.

## spread the risk

If you're considering investing your money, take some time to think about how much risk you're willing to take.



If it's appropriate to your circumstances, you might also consider taking some financial advice. While taking a bigger risk could mean a bigger return, these aren't guaranteed so don't take a chance if you can't afford to lose money. **If you do discover a pro**

**you can't sort out with the business directly, the ombudsman may be able to help on 0300 123 9 123 or [www.financial-ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.financial-ombudsman.org.uk).**