



Tax planning for the lower paid

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Introduction

Higher paid workers can employ accountants to advise them on how to reduce their tax bills.

Lower paid workers also have scope to reduce their tax liability within the law, but have less scope for finding out how. This article gives some suggestions.

Some of the comments below are, strictly, not tax matters. As they have a similar effect, they have been included.

Have more than one job

Having more than one job can save national insurance. This is because national insurance is calculated *per job*, unlike income tax which is calculated according to your annual income from all sources.

For the tax year 2019/20 (6 April 2019 to 5 April 2020), the national insurance threshold is £166 a week or £720 a month or £8,632 a year.

Consider a man (or woman) with one job paying £400 a week. He pays national insurance on the amount by which his pay exceeds this threshold. This is £234 (which is £400 - £166). The rate of national insurance paid by an employee is 12%. So the employee pays £28.08 national insurance.

Now consider another person who has two jobs, each paying £200 a week. He still earns £400 a week, and pays the same income tax as the man with one job. In each of his two jobs, he is allowed the earnings threshold of £166. So in each job he pays 12% national insurance on £34. This is £4.08 in each job. This is a total of £8.16 for the two jobs.

In each case, the person earns £400 a week. In one job, he pays £28.08 national insurance. In the other, he only pays £8.16, saving almost £20.

There are some points worth noting. First, the two employers must not be “associated”. For example, they cannot be two companies owned by the same person. They must be genuinely independent of each other.

Second, there should be at least one job where earnings are at least the lower earnings limit. For 2019/20, this is £118 a week or £512 a month. This is because national insurance contributions count towards the state pension. You need 35 years of full contributions to

get the full state pension. Provided you have at least one job where you are paid £118 or more a week, you build up that entitlement.

Note that this saving applies only to national insurance. Having two jobs does not save you any income tax. In each of our examples, the employee pays income tax on £400 a week. The saving comes from the fact that national insurance operates under different rules from income tax.

The second employer will also not pay employer's national insurance if your earnings are less than £166 a week.

This advantage does not apply if you have already reached state pension age, as you are no longer liable to pay national insurance.

But check that a second job is worth it

A second job is not always beneficial.

Suppose you have the chance to do a second job for £40 a week. After 20% income tax, that is £32 in your pocket.

You need to consider transport costs. A bus fare of £1.50 each way may not seem much, but for five return journeys, that is £15 a week, almost halving your net benefit to just £17.

One of the biggest costs for a second job is, perhaps surprisingly, food. A second job makes it more likely that you will use ready meals or food products that have been prepared. As a rough guide, a meal in a cafe or restaurant costs about three times the amount of a home-cooked meal. A ready meal, such as one to put in a microwave, costs about twice the amount of raw ingredients.

Another factor is child care. In practice it is unlikely that a second job will pay enough to buy professional child care. If you have family responsibilities, a second job is only viable if you have an inexpensive or free babysitter.

Non-financial matters should also be considered. What effect will your absence have on your marriage, children or any other family arrangement? Will you be too tired to do both jobs properly?

All these matters do not necessarily stop you taking a second job, but should be considered before you do.

Employment expenses

An employee is entitled to claim tax relief for expenses wholly, exclusively and necessarily incurred in the performance of the duties of the employment. In practice, this means that very little may be claimed.

Commuting from home to work, for example, does not qualify as it is not “in the performance” of the duties but to get the person there to start those duties. (There are a few very limited exceptions.)

There is no tax relief for ordinary clothing, but there is relief for protective clothing, uniforms or performers’ stage clothing. If the clothing qualifies, repairs and laundry also qualify.

Some engineers are required to provide their own tools. In such a case, the tools are tax-deductible. Note that there is no tax relief if the engineer *prefers* to use his own tools; only if the engineer is *required* to provide them.

Membership of a relevant professional body qualifies. HMRC publishes a long list of bodies it accepts. Other memberships, such as of a trade union, do not qualify for tax relief.

Travel *in the course of work* qualifies. So visiting a customer, or delivering or collecting goods using the worker’s own transport qualifies. The rate is generally 45p a mile for a car, 25p for a motorcycle and 20p for a bicycle. If the employer reimburses the mileage at these rates, there is no tax to pay and no relief to claim.

An employer is not required to reimburse mileage at these rates. Mileage can be reimbursed at any figure the employer and employee agree. If it is more than the rate, the employee pays tax on the excess; if less, the employee can claim tax relief on the shortfall. The bicycle rate is often overlooked. If an employee cycles 20 miles a week on business, that is perhaps 960 miles a year for which the employee can claim £192 against taxable earnings. That will save tax of £38.40 a year. And you are getting fitter at your employer’s expense!

Still with bicycles, there is a generous tax scheme whereby the employer may lend a bicycle to an employee for travelling from home to work. There is no tax charge for personal use, but you cannot claim the 20p mileage allowance. The advantage is that the employee can then buy the bicycle at “market value” without paying tax. HMRC has produced tables of what it will accept is market value. It means that you can have a new shining bicycle which becomes yours after one year for less than one fifth of its cost. After five years, the bicycle can simply be given to you.

Table: percentage of cost of bicycle regarded as market value when sold to employee

Age of cycle at transfer	Bicycle cost less than £500	Bicycle cost more than £500
1 year	18%	25%
18 months	16%	21%
2 years	13%	17%
3 years	8%	12%
4 years	3%	7%
5 years	0%	2%
6 or more years	0%	0%

If your work involves using a computer, your employer is required to give you free eye tests and to pay for any corrective spectacles or contact lenses. There is no tax to pay for either.

An employer may provide one free medical check-up each year to each employee. An employer may also provide up to £500 of recommended medical treatment to assist an employee back to work after an absence of at least 28 days for ill health or injury. If making a claim, stress how this will enhance their reputation as a caring employer.

Many workers fail to claim for uniforms, tools and other expenses. To simplify matters, HMRC has agreed a table of flat rate expenses. The worker can claim the amount without having to produce any receipts or other evidence. The amounts range from £60 a year for many apprentices to £185 for an ambulance worker on active service. The full list can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/hmrc-internal-manuals/employment-income-manual/eim32712>.

A more detailed summary of tax relief for employment expenses can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/tax-relief-for-employees>. It should be noted that some expenses are subject to eligibility conditions for tax relief.

Tips and gratuities

If you are waiter or waitress, hairdresser, taxi driver or in any other occupation where tipping is customary, tax can be saved by having the tip passed directly to you rather than to your employer. This is most relevant for waiters and waitresses.

If a customer gives you a £10 note tip, that is subject to income tax as it is “income arising” which is taxable. But it is not subject to national insurance as it is not “earnings”. This is another quirk of national insurance law.

If the tip is added to the bill as a service charge, or tips are placed in a jar by the till, the tip *is* subject to national insurance. This is because it is distributed by your employer and is therefore regarded as earnings.

Claim your benefits

There is a wide range of social security benefits available to individuals depending on their circumstances. Some of these benefits depend on having paid sufficient national insurance, though most now are not. Some benefits are for a fixed amount, while other benefits are means-tested. That means the amount you receive depends on how much you earn. The benefit tops up your income.

Some people do not claim because they think they are scrounging or begging. This is the wrong attitude. Social security is, in effect, taxation in reverse. Instead of you giving money to the state, the state gives money to you. Social security is negative income tax. You should have no hesitation in claiming it.

Every year benefits go unclaimed. The official figure of unclaimed benefits is about £1.6 billion, but the website “entitled to” calculated the figure as a staggering £21 billion in 2016/17. It estimated that more than 8 million families do not claim all the benefits they are entitled to. Their website can help identify what benefits you are entitled to. It can be found at <https://www.entitledto.co.uk/blog/2018/december/over-20-billion-still-unclaimed-in-means-tested-benefits/>

The largest group not to claim benefits are women aged between 55 and 64. Many people do not realise they may be able to claim benefits while in employment. Supermarkets pay less in corporation tax than their workers claim in benefits to top up their wages.

Benefits with a low take-up rate include many disablement and caring allowances. The old disability living allowance had a take-up rate of just 11%. That means only one in nine eligible people claimed it.

Attendance allowance is often overlooked. It can be claimed by anyone who looks after a person who is over 65 and needs attention or supervision because of disability. It does not depend on how much national insurance anyone has paid nor on how much you earn. Anyone who spends a significant amount of time looking after their husband, wife or other relation or other person may be able to claim. For 2019/20, the rate is £87.65 a week for day and night care, or £58.70 a week for day or night care. This is £4,557 a year and £3,052 respectively. It is not taxed and does not affect your other benefits. It is worth having.

The tax system has a **blind person's allowance**. This is £2,450 in 2019/20. This is the additional amount that a blind person may earn in a tax year before paying income tax. This will usually save £490 a year in tax. The taxpayer must be registered blind which does not require a complete loss of sight. Only about one in three eligible people claim this benefit.

Pension credit is another benefit with a poor take-up rate. It may be claimed by anyone of state pension age with a low income. It has two elements: the guarantee credit and the savings credit. The savings credit is now being phased out. The guarantee credit broadly ensures that a single person (at 2019/20 rates) receives at least £167.25 a week, and a couple £255.25. This equates to £8,697 a year and £13,273 respectively. In effect, it is a top-up of the state pension.

The table below indicates the benefits to which you may be eligible according to circumstances:

Table: summary of benefits to which a person may be eligible

Circumstances	Possible benefits
Adoption	Statutory adoption pay; statutory paternity pay; shared parental pay; child benefit; universal credit or child credit
Bereavement	Bereavement support payment or widowed parent's allowance; funeral expenses payment
Carer	Carer's allowance; universal credit or income support
Child	Child benefit; universal credit or child tax credit; pension credit; Sure Start maternity grant; free school lunches; Healthy Start food and vitamins
Cold weather	Winter fuel allowance; cold weather payment
Disabled	Disability living allowance; personal independence payment; attendance allowance; industrial injuries benefit; universal credit or employment and support allowance
Guardian	Child benefit; guardian's allowance
Home owner	Council tax reduction; loan for mortgage interest
Low income	Universal credit or working tax credit; budgeting loan; council tax reduction; employment and support allowance and other means-tested benefits
Maternity	Statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance; parental pay; universal credit or income support; employment and support allowance; child tax credit

Paternity	Statutory paternity pay; shared parental pay
Pensioner	State pension; pension credit; winter fuel allowance; bus pass; free prescriptions and other health benefits
Pregnant	Statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance; parental pay; universal credit or income support; employment and support allowance; Sure Start maternity grant; Healthy Start food and vitamins
Sickness or injury	Statutory sick pay; sickness benefit; industrial injuries benefit
Tenant	Universal credit or housing benefit; council tax reduction
Unable to work	Employment and support allowance; statutory sick pay; industrial injuries benefit
Unemployed	Jobseeker's allowance; universal credit or income support

Universal credit is gradually replacing other benefits which is why some benefits are described as “universal credit or...”.

Each benefit has its own eligibility rules, so entitlement should never be assumed. Some of these benefits are means-tested, which means that you only qualify if you have a low income. Other benefits depend on having paid sufficient national insurance. There are some very limited circumstances when other benefits may be claimable.

The Scottish Parliament introduced seven further benefits in summer 2019 to augment the national benefits listed above for Scottish residents.

Advice on benefits is offered by many organisations such as Citizens Advice Bureau and Age Concern. The definitive “bible” on benefits is *Welfare Benefits and Tax Credits* published by Child Poverty Action Group. The 1,848-page edition of this clearly written and comprehensive guide for 2019/20 is a bargain at just £61.

In addition to state benefits, there are other forms of help available. When the current welfare state was set up in 1948, many old charities were in effect merged into parochial charities. Some of these parochial charities are very wealthy (particularly in affluent areas where they are less needed), and can provide help with such items as new furniture or music lessons for a child.

Many clubs, professional bodies and similar have benevolent funds. If you or your partner were (for example) a chartered accountant, freemason or member of a London club, they may also be able to provide assistance, often in the form of a one-off gift.

There are many charities that can provide help. It can be worth an Internet search (which can usually be done free at your local library). This again should not be seen as scrounging. Remember the charity was set up because its founders wanted to help people in your situation.

There are many specific unusual charities. Gunnar’s Wheels will provide a wheelchair cart for your disabled dog. “Be A Dear and Donate a Brassiere” will provide a correct-sized bra to a homeless woman. And there are more, many many more.

Transferable marriage allowance

It is possible for one party to a marriage (including same sex marriage) or civil partnership to transfer one tenth of their personal allowance to their partner. It does not apply to people who live together but who are not legally married or in a civil partnership.

Imagine a husband works while the wife stays at home. (This is the commonest circumstance, though it applies equally if the wife works and the husband has no taxable income.)

In our example, the wife's personal allowance is wasted. She is allowed to earn £12,500 a year tax free (2019/20 rates) which has no meaning if she has no earnings. The transferable allowance allows her to pass one tenth of this, namely £1,250 to her husband. This will save him £250 a year in tax.

Be paid in goods

Suppose you work part-time in a food shop and earn £400 a week. Those earnings are subject to income tax and national insurance.

You may agree with the shopkeeper that you will be paid as £300 in cash and £100 in goods. Such an agreement is perfectly legal.

You will still pay income tax on £400 a week as the goods count as benefits arising from employment. But you will not pay national insurance as it is not cash. This is yet another quirk of national insurance.

Eat your sandwiches in the park

If you buy sandwiches in a shop and eat them there, they are subject to VAT at 20%. That means that one sixth of the cost is tax. This is because the shop is supplying you with catering. But if you eat your sandwiches in the park, they have provided you with food which is zero-rated.

Note that this only applies to cold food. Hot food such as fish and chips, burgers and pies have 20% VAT wherever you eat them.

And we remind you that sandwiches are much cheaper if you make them yourself.

Claim loss relief

You may have a sideline such as being a disc jockey or refurbishing old furniture. If this is a trade rather than a hobby, you may be eligible to claim loss relief. This is a tax relief that is often overlooked.

Suppose you earn £21,000 working in a call centre, and you also do some work as a disc jockey where you made a loss of £2,000. Provided your disc jockeying is a trade and not a hobby, you can offset the £2,000 loss against your employment income, and will pay tax on only £19,000. This is called sideways loss relief.

As your pay will have had income tax deducted at source under PAYE, you get your tax relief by filling in a tax form. This must be completed on paper by 31 October after the end of the tax year in which the loss arose, or on line by 31 January. The tax year runs from 6 April to 5

April, so if the loss arose in November 2019, the return must be submitted on paper by 31 October 2020 or online by 31 January 2021.

Note that loss relief may only be claimed for a *trade*, not for a hobby. A trade is, broadly, a commercial activity earnestly pursued with a view to making a profit. The full definition considers six “badges of trade”. In practice, the bar is set very low, making it easy to qualify as a trade. A good indication is whether you have advertised your products or services to potential customers.

An activity may be a trade even though it never makes a profit. It may also continue as a trade during quiet periods.

Whether an activity is a trade or hobby is a matter of fact and not a choice. In practice, there are many borderline cases which can be argued either way.

Remember that if you treat an activity as a trade, you must pay income tax if you later make profits that exceed £1,000 a year. If you do make a profit, there are many things you can do to reduce the taxable amount, such as forming a limited company or employing your husband or wife, but these are outside the scope of this article.

Check your national insurance

If you are under pension age, you should check your national insurance record.

You need 35 years of contributions to qualify for the full state pension. You also need to have paid some national insurance to qualify for some benefits such as jobseeker's allowance.

You can check your record online (for which you need a Gateway User ID) or by phone or by writing to HMRC, National insurance contributions and benefits office, BX9 1AN. You need to know your national insurance number. This takes the form of two letters, six digits and a final letter in the form AB 12 34 56 C. This can be found on any tax document or most payroll documents, such as a P45 leaving certificate or P60 annual certificate.

A year only counts if contributions have been paid or credited for all 52 weeks. So a single missed contribution excludes that year.

Contributions are paid or credited while you are employed, self-employed, unemployed, in hospital, in care, in prison or at home looking after children or a relative. In fact, the main circumstances where contributions are neither paid nor credited is when you have been overseas. Even then, UK national insurance is usually paid for the first year or two years of absence.

However, PAYE records were not as strict up to the 1980s as they are now. So your contributions may not have been recorded against your number.

There may also be gaps if, exceptionally, your earnings were below the lower earnings limit for national insurance. There may also be a gap if you had been unemployed but did not claim benefit, or were self-employed and had low profits below the class 2 threshold.

If there are gaps, they can be plugged in one of two ways. If you believe that your record is wrong (such as not recording an employment), you can raise this with HMRC. In practice, HMRC is ready to accept almost any evidence in support, such as a payslip or letter of appointment.

Otherwise, gaps may be plugged by paying voluntary **class 3 contributions**. These can usually be paid for the current tax year and the previous six years. For 2019/20, the rate is £15 a week or £780 for a whole year. But remember, you only need to get the record up to 35 years. So, for a working life of over 40 years, a few years missed do not matter.

Someone who reached state retirement age between 6 April 2009 and 5 April 2016 only needed 30 years.

But there may be a cheaper way by registering a trade that earns less than £6,365 a year. You then pay class 2 contributions of just £3 a week. (If your trade makes a profit of more than £8,632 a year, you will also have to pay class 4, but this is not likely in this scenario.) Class 2 counts towards your record and can save you £624 a year.

Note that class 3 contributions can be paid by someone who has already reached state pension age but only in respect of a tax year before state pension age.

Class 3 contributions are voluntary. You do not have to pay them but could accept a lower pension. In practice, it is almost always advisable to pay voluntary class 3 or class 2 to plug a gap.

There is a particular provision for a woman who married before May 1977. She may have elected to pay a **reduced rate** of national insurance (5.85% rather than 12%) and receive a pension based on her husband's contributions. Although this option may no longer be exercised, women who had chosen it may continue to pay the reduced rate. A woman may revoke this election at any time and pay the full rate. Changes to national insurance law in the last 40 years mean she should do this for the few remaining years. Reduced rate will become extinct in 2028.

An issue is that the woman may have forgotten that she made the election. There has been a series of sad cases where women only realised this when they found their pension was about two-thirds of what they expected. There is a right of appeal to a tax tribunal, though very few of such cases have succeeded. The original documents that the women signed more than 42 years ago have long been thrown away, so HMRC relies on entries transferred to their files. In the absence of such a document, almost any evidence can rebut HMRC's assertion.

Beware of scammers

Sadly, there are scammers who are prepared to steal and trick even poor people out of whatever money they have. It does not matter to them that you no longer have a pension or cannot afford food or heating. There are many things that you can do to protect yourself.

First, beware of emails that appear to come from HMRC or a bank. HMRC has a specialist anti-phishing department that in one year dealt with 300 million bogus emails. HMRC never sends an email telling people that they have a tax rebate. They will send you a letter.

Nuisance calls are often scams. Indications include:

- a pause (and sometimes a click) before anyone responds when you answer. This is because they will auto-dial hundreds of numbers and only respond to the first ones that answer. Letting the telephone ring seven times before answering is often sufficient for nuisance callers to ring off
- they check who you are before saying who they are. Most genuine callers will identify themselves first. They can often be reluctant to say who they are
- they start by asking how you are, in the hope of moving you to a relaxing chat where you are more vulnerable
- they have a strong accent. Because effective action has been taken in the UK, many calls now come from places like India. In October 2019, British and Indian police co-operated in shutting down scsm call centres in Calcutta after a four-year investigation.

A call is almost certainly a scam if the caller or emailer says:

- they are from Microsoft and your software has been compromised. They aim to sell you bogus software and possibly to access your bank details
- your telephone is about to be cut off
- your bank account has been compromised and you need to transfer funds to a safe account
- someone you know is stranded (often in Thailand) and urgently needs funds
- there are unclaimed funds (often in Nigeria) that you can help liberate for a generous share.

If you are having problems with your software, get it resolved by a reputable computer dealer. If you do not know of one, ask people you trust who they use.

Beware exciting offers. If something sounds too good to be true, it probably is not true. Never be pressed into making a decision just because an offer is about to expire.

Never give your PIN number or password to anyone, even your own data processing department. Change your passwords frequently.

Never click on to a link in an email. If you receive a suspicious email, do not open it. A genuine email will identify its sender and give you a nature of its contents in the heading visible from the list. If in doubt, delete it. If it is a genuine message, the sender will contact you in another way.

Do not post useful information about yourself on **social media**. This includes your date of birth, your mother's maiden name, the name of your first pet, your first school or when you are going away on holiday.

Do not send sensitive messages using **free wi-fi** such as in cafes. This may be an "evil access point" where everything you send, such as bank details, is captured. An alternative is to use a virtual public network (VPN) which automatically encrypts the data.

If using a retail website such as eBay, resist any offers to complete the transaction outside their website. Pay for goods on a secure system such as PayPal or Apple Pay. Do not send a bank transfer. Do not use a cryptocurrency like bitcoin; use a recognised currency such as sterling, euros or US dollars.

Never buy a car or other vehicle without seeing it first. For motor vehicles, check the paperwork.

Do not allow anyone to install a **remote access tool** on your computer. This allows them to access your computer as if they were sitting at your desk. It can be sensible to allow a reputable computer company to install software that allows them to diagnose problems remotely but this must only be when you have specifically authorised it, and when you are sitting at the computer to see what is happening.

Beware **dating websites**. That attractive young girl in the next town may be a devious scammer hundreds of miles away. At some point, they may ask for some money to help them meet you. Never send money to anyone you have not met; indeed be reluctant to send money to anyone. Be reluctant to keep anything secret; there is no shame in dating.

Beware **recruitment sites**. There is no reason for you to tell them your national insurance number, date of birth or bank account details. It is generally illegal for an employment agency to require you to pay a fee. Check up the company online. At some point, meet the person you are dealing with.

Beware **holiday sites**; the flights and hotels may not exist. Pay by credit card or debit card only. Check photographs by using a reverse image search such as Tin Eye. Check details of companies, airlines and hotels online.

Buy **tickets** to concerts and sports events from the organiser, official agent or a reputable ticket exchange site. Pay by bank card. Do not pay for tickets that will be handed to you when you arrive or left at the ticket office.

When **banking** online, ensure that you use the bank's log out facility. Closing the app or website is not sufficient.

Be vigilant when **withdrawing cash** from a machine. Always check bank statements, and promptly speak to your bank if you see an item you do not recognise. If your card is retained by the machine, report this promptly to the card issuer, preferably while still at the machine.

Never give **personal details** over the telephone, regardless of how persuasive or insistent someone is. Unfortunately banks are the biggest offenders. If they ring you, they will often demand that *you* go through *their* security checks before saying why. In all cases, refuse to answer the call. Then call your bank on a number you already have, having first checked that the telephone line has cleared. Indeed saying, "I will call you back, can I have your name and telephone number" will often end a scam call. A genuine caller will give you their first name (even at HMRC) and a telephone number. Do not use that number but use a number provided elsewhere such as on your cheque book or bank statement. If possible, call back on another telephone.

Beware **pension consultants**. At some point, they may ask you to sign a form authorising them to investigate your pension details. This form may actually be authorising them to withdraw all your funds.

Never hand over money to a **courier** who pretends to be from a bank or the police. There are no circumstances when this is a legitimate request. If you doubt the genuineness of a caller, ask the person to wait while you call to check. A genuine police officer or tax officer or court official will not object.

Never buy goods or services from an **unsolicited trader**, such as a cold caller or someone who just knocks on your door.

Never **invest** in anything you do not understand. Do not be taken in by reports of high yields — this is a common ploy for Ponzi frauds. Early investors are paid from funds of later investors until the scammer has enough and then disappears. Do not be taken in by glossy literature or smooth presentations. Deal only with reputable financial institutions. Details can be checked with the Financial Conduct Authority.

Do not enter unsolicited **competitions**. You will not win. Winners of genuine competitions are never asked to pay a "small fee" to receive their prize. It is surprising how many people claim a prize in a competition they never entered! Never dial a number starting 09.

Never give money to a **beggar**, about half of whom are not in need at all. A beggar can easily make £200 a day. Someone making £50,000 a year tax-free is not worthy of your charity. Don't give someone the price of a cup of tea; if you feel charitable buy them the tea. Pay the bill directly — after all, that is what the original Good Samaritan did. There are also many reputable charities that you can support.

If you do become a **victim**, report it. Don't be too embarrassed — victims have included professors, doctors, judges, lawyers and accountants. Fraud should be reported to the police. Even if you have not fallen victim, you may be able to provide the police with useful intelligence, such as a description and patten of a suspicious caller. There is a national body called Action Fraud, though this has been criticised for its poor performance.

Paying by **credit card** or debit card can make the bank liable for any loss. Recently banks have also become liable for obvious scams. For these reasons, banks will sometimes stop

payments. Sometimes the payment is not fraudulent at all. (A director of this company had a £21 debit card payment for groceries stopped because of a “suspicious” purchase of a low value coin from a reputable coin dealer.) While this is annoying, it is preferable than having vulnerable people ripped off by cowboy builders and fraudsters.

It is advisable to have more than one bank account, and to keep some cash readily available. All banks must provide basic bank accounts that operate like money boxes.

The police and many other bodies provide useful guidance on fraud protection and assistance.