

DEBT AND MENTAL HEALTH EVIDENCE FORM
(VERSION FOUR)

ADVISER USER GUIDE (CASEWORK)

1st October, 2019

DEBT AND MENTAL HEALTH EVIDENCE FORM (VERSION FOUR) ADVISER USER GUIDE (CASEWORK)

What is the DMHEF?

- The DMHEF is a form that health and social care professionals complete.
- It can be used when an indebted person needs evidence to confirm that they have a mental health condition.
- The health and social care professional can use the DMHEF to:
 - confirm whether a person has a mental health condition
 - give the name of this condition
 - and - if they choose to - provide further information (e.g. how the mental health condition might affect the person's ability to manage their money).
- The indebted person chooses the health or social care professional – ideally, this will be a professional who already knows the person and their situation.
- The completed DMHEF is used by the organisation that requested it to decide what action to take next. This organisation could be a firm that a person owes money to. Or it could be a debt adviser helping the person with their finances.

The consent form

- Health or social care professionals will not complete the DMHEF without the explicit consent of the indebted person whose information is about to be shared.
- The DMHEF consent form should therefore be completed by the indebted person. The consent form and DMHEF can be given to the professional at the same time.

What the DMHEF isn't for

- The DMHEF *is not* the only type of evidence that organisations should accept – there are other evidence types that should be considered first (page 5).
- The DMHEF *is never* automatically used for every individual who discloses a mental health condition – instead it is selectively and carefully used.

How should I use the DMHEF?

- A guide to using the DMHEF is provided on page 4.
- The full set of DMHEF resources can be found at:

www.moneyadvicetrust.org/DMHEF

This is a new version of the DMHEF – what is different?

- This is the fourth version of the DMHEF. It replaces all previous versions.
- This version of the DMHEF is simpler and shorter for health and social care professionals to complete than previous versions.
- A range of health and social care professionals are eligible to complete the DMHEF – ranging from social workers to mental health therapists.
- The front side of the DMHEF now simply asks for the professional to confirm if the client has a mental health problem, and to give the name of this problem.
- The reverse side of the DMHEF provides a short space for the professional to provide further information about the client – including, for example, how the mental health condition might affect the person's ability to manage their money.
- For those familiar with version three of the DMHEF, we provide a more detailed explanation of the changes to the form (and rationale for these) on pages 9-10.

Professionals who request payment

- One reason for creating version four of the DMHEF was to end the practice of some General Practitioners (GPs) in England requesting such a payment.
- **If the GP is working in England** and they agree to complete the DMHEF, then they must do so without charge. This is part of their contract with NHS England, and is required under the following regulatory document: National Health Service (General Medical Services Contracts and Personal Medical Services Agreements) (Amendment) Regulations 2019.
- **If the GP is working in Northern Ireland, Scotland or Wales**, they can ask for payment to complete the DMHEF. This situation may, however, change in the future.
- However, please remember that most health and social care professionals will not request payment to complete the DMHEF.

Who created this version of the DMHEF?

- This version was created by the Money Advice Trust and Money and Mental Health Policy Institute in partnership with the British Medical Association, Credit Services Association, Department of Health and Social Care, Money Advice Liaison Group, Royal College of Psychiatrists, and UK Finance. Prior to this, the DMHEF was overseen by the Money Advice Liaison Group. More information on the DMHEF (including its development) can be found at: www.moneyadvicetrust.org/DMHEF.

USING THE DMHEF: A TEN STEP-GUIDE

- There are ten steps that need to be followed when completing the DMHEF (see below). In this section of the guide, we describe each of these steps in detail.

ADVISER: WHETHER TO COLLECT EVIDENCE	<p>Step 1. A mental health problem is disclosed</p> <p>Step 2. The adviser finds out more about this</p> <p>Step 3. The adviser asks themselves...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) whether further evidence is <i>actually needed</i>? b) what <i>alternatives</i> to the DMHEF could be accepted? c) whether the client <i>is able</i> to collect this evidence?
ADVISER: EXPLAIN TO CLIENT, APPROACH PROFESSIONAL	<p>Step 4. The adviser explains how the evidence will be used... and the adviser gets client explicit consent to do this</p> <p>Step 5. The client reads, signs and returns the Consent Form</p> <p>Step 6. The adviser sends the health professional the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ blank DMHEF ▪ completed Consent Form ▪ stamped addressed envelope (with adviser's address on it) ▪ a covering letter pack
PROFESSIONAL	<p>Step 7. The professional completes and returns the DMHEF</p>
ADVISER: DECIDES ACTION	<p>Step 8. The adviser receives the completed DMHEF and client Consent Form, and decides what action to take</p> <p>Step 9. The adviser gives a copy of the completed DMHEF to the client</p> <p>Step 10. The adviser gives copies of the DMHEF (and Consent Form) to creditors</p>

ADVISER: WHETHER TO COLLECT EVIDENCE

Step 1. A mental health problem is disclosed

The client tells the adviser that they have a mental health problem that is affecting their ability to manage their money.

Step 2. The adviser finds out more about this

Before deciding to use the DMHEF, the adviser will always talk to the client about their situation, with the aim of developing a good understanding of this.

The adviser will ask questions such as how the mental health problem affects their ability to manage money; how the mental health problem affects their ability to communicate with their advisers/creditors; and whether anyone helps the client manage their finances (such as a family member).

This conversation can provide the adviser with all the information that is needed – meaning that the collection of further evidence is not required at all, or that evidence is needed but it might be collected using an *alternative* to the DMHEF (see below).

Step 3. The adviser asks themselves...

a) ...whether further evidence is *actually needed*?

The adviser should have now spoken with the client to establish how their ability to manage money has been impacted by the reported mental health problem.

If unanswered questions, concerns or doubts remain, or the individual's situation is complex and needs further exploration, only then should the adviser consider the further collection of evidence to assist with this.

However, advisers will be aware that it may not be necessary to collect further evidence to achieve some actions. For example, most creditors are obliged to offer a breathing space, consider reasonable offers, and not harass a client regardless of *whether or not* the client has a mental health condition.

b) ...what *alternatives* to using the DMHEF could be accepted?

If further evidence is needed, the adviser should begin by considering alternatives to issuing a blank DMHEF. Where available, these can save time for everyone.

Firstly, the adviser should check whether the client has already recently completed a DMHEF for another organisation – if so, this provides a potential option.

Secondly, if this is not the case, the adviser should consider whether an alternative to the DMHEF would work equally as well. This could include copies of prescriptions, patient letters, or other materials that confirm the client's mental health situation (and following this confirmation, assist with a further client conversation).

The rationale for considering alternatives is purely practical. Clients may have equally valid forms of evidence to hand (which they might be able to share more easily than having to physically get a DMHEF completed). On another level, using alternative forms of evidence to the DMHEF could reduce demand on the time of already busy health and social care professionals.

c) whether the client *is able to collect evidence using the DMHEF?*

If the adviser feels they have no option but to use the DMHEF, they should take the time to establish whether the client will be able to collect this evidence from a health or social care professional (and if so, how long they will need).

This is because a client's mental health problem could make it unreasonably difficult for them to physically engage with these professionals to complete a DMHEF.

Where this is identified as an issue, more time or flexibility needs to be given to the client. Or the client will need to obtain third-party assistance.

Consequently, if it is felt that the client is:

- **able** to collect this evidence (with/without more time being given), advisers should continue to follow steps 4-10
- **unable** to collect this evidence, then the client should be advised to get help from a third-party who will help them do this (the client should be given additional time and forbearance to arrange this). Until this is achieved, the process is stopped at this step.

ADVISER: EXPLAIN TO CLIENT WHAT TO DO

Step 4. The adviser explains how the evidence will be used...

The adviser will need to explain to the client how the evidence collected from the health and social care professional will be used. This includes an explanation of why the adviser wishes to collect this data, what the data will be used for, who the evidence might be shared with (e.g. the creditor and possibly the creditor's agent), how it will be securely stored, and how long it will be stored for. Without this explanation, the client cannot know what they are consenting to, and consent therefore cannot be properly obtained.

...and the adviser gets client explicit consent to collect the evidence

The adviser will also need to ask the client if they understand this explanation, and allow them to ask questions if necessary to clarify any points.

Only after doing this, should the adviser ask the client for their explicit consent to process their information in this way.

There may be additional steps or actions that your organisation requires you to take to record this explicit consent. However, you should always ask the client to read, complete and sign the Consent Form that accompanies the DMHEF.

Step 5. The client reads, signs and returns the Consent Form

By reading, signing, and returning the Consent Form to the adviser, the client is giving their explicit consent for the health or social care professional to complete the DMHEF.

Unless the Consent Form is completed and signed, the health or social care professional should not complete the DMHEF.

The adviser should be aware that before signing the Consent Form, the client may want to ask the adviser further questions about the DMHEF, including what will happen to their information, or with whom it might be shared.

It is important for the adviser to remember that the Consent Form can also be completed and signed by a third party authorised to act on their behalf.

When completing the Consent Form, the client is asked to nominate a health or social care professional to approach for evidence. This person should be someone who knows the client in a professional capacity. This professional could be a general practitioner, psychiatrist, nurse, psychologist, occupational therapist, social worker or another member of the health and social care 'team'.

Step 6. The adviser sends the health professional the 'DMHEF pack'

The adviser will need to send the health or social care professional the following:

- a blank DMHEF version 4
- a completed Consent Form (adviser version)
- a *pre-paid* envelope with the adviser's address on it (so the completed DMHEF can be returned to the adviser without any cost to either the client or health and social care professional).

You may wish to draft your own covering letter to accompany these materials. You should write your client's contact details, the name of your organisation and any reference number on the front of the DMHEF.

You should then send the DMHEF pack to the nominated health or social care professional.

PROFESSIONAL: COMPLETION AND RETURN OF THE DMHEF

Step 7. The professional completes and returns the DMHEF

The health and social care professional completes, signs and stamps the DMHEF, and returns this to the adviser in the stamped addressed envelope (along with a copy of the Consent Form signed by the client).

Step 8. The adviser receives the completed DMHEF and client Consent Form, and decides what action to take in light of this

On its receipt, the adviser should read and check the DMHEF (ensuring it is signed and stamped by the health or social care professional to authenticate its completion and combat fraud).

The DMHEF will contain information that should not only be shared with advisers, but which could help improve your understanding of the client's situation, and your relationship with them.

The adviser should take into account the information in the DMHEF to help make a decision on what action to take next. For credible information on a range of mental health problems, please visit www.moneyandmentalhealth.org/seeing-through-the-fog-blog/

ADVISER: DECIDE ON THE ACTION TO TAKE

Step 9. The adviser gives a copy of the completed DMHEF to the client

The adviser should give a photocopy of the completed DMHEF to the client as soon as possible, as they will want to see what has been written about their mental health problem.

Step 10. The adviser gives copies of the DMHEF (and Consent Form) to creditors

If the completed DMHEF contains relevant and useful information, the adviser should send a photocopy of the completed DMHEF to all appropriate creditors that your client has.

If the completed DMHEF *does not* contain any relevant information, but an organisation specifically requested that a DMHEF was completed, you should (a) inform the organisation that requested this information that the client will not be providing evidence (and give a reason for this) and (b) discuss this decision with the client.

You should supply your client with a list of all the creditors to whom the completed DMHEF has been sent. These actions will ensure that the client has full knowledge of what information has been provided about them and to whom.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: What are the differences between Version 3 and 4 of the DMHEF?

The major difference is there are fewer questions.

Version 3 of the DMHEF asked health and social care professionals to answer eight separate questions and provide 14 different pieces of information.

Version 4 of the DMHEF asks professionals to answer two questions and to provide three different pieces of information.

A comparison of Version 4 and Version 3 is provided in Box 1 (overleaf).

Q: Why was Version 4 of the DMHEF created?

One reason for creating version four of the DMHEF was to end the practice of some General Practitioners (GPs) in England requesting such a payment.

If the GP is working in England and they agree to complete the DMHEF, then they must do so without charge. This is part of their contract with NHS England, and is required under the following regulatory document: National Health Service (General Medical Services Contracts and Personal Medical Services Agreements) (Amendment) Regulations 2019.

If the GP is working in Northern Ireland, Scotland or Wales, they can ask for payment to complete the DMHEF. This situation may, however, change in the future.

However, please remember that most health and social care professionals will not request payment to complete the DMHEF.

Q: Does the new DMHEF ask how a person's money management is affected?

As seen in Box 1 overleaf, professionals are asked to provide information on how a person's mental health problem might affect their ability to manage their money.

Our experience from the three previous versions of the DMHEF, is that some health and social care professionals choose not to answer this question (often on the basis that professionally they do not know the person well enough/have enough contact to answer), while other professionals are often able to provide detailed information.

When a health and social care professional is unable to provide this information, we would obviously recommend talking with the client about this impact, but also consulting wider sources of information about the impact of mental health problems on a person's ability to manage money (including www.moneyandmentalhealth.org).

If this does not suffice, then advisers may consider asking the client to obtain evidence from a different health or social care professional (who can provide this information). As this evidence is both an optional part of the DMHEF, and potentially also detailed, advisers may be asked by professionals for payment to provide this.

Box 1 Comparison: Version 3 and Version 4 of the DMHEF	
Version 3 of the DMHEF	Version 4 of the DMHEF
<p>Q1. What is your relationship with the person reporting the mental health problem?</p> <p>Q2. Does the person have a mental health problem?</p> <p>Q3. What is this mental health problem? If it has a name or diagnosis, what is it?</p> <p>Q4. Does the person have a mental health problem that affects their ability to manage their money?</p> <p>Q5. If the person is receiving treatment or support for this mental health problem, does the treatment or support affect their ability to manage their money?</p> <p>Q6. When communicating with the person, are there any special circumstances that a creditor needs to take into account?</p> <p>Q7. What was the approximate date when (a) this mental health problem first started, (b) the first treatment was given, (c) the most recent episode took place, and (d) is the episode on-going?</p> <p>Q8. Is there anything else we should know about the person?</p>	<p>Q1. Does the person have a mental health problem? [Write the name of the mental health problem(s) below.]</p> <p>Q2. Relationship to the person named above (please tick box).</p> <p>Supplementary info. (optional): If you are able to, please do provide further information about the person's situation. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - how the mental health problem affects their ability to manage money. - how the person's ability to communicate with their creditor might be affected. - any other information that may help the person (e.g. the severity or duration of the condition; any relevant treatment the person is receiving; or whether the person is in a situation of mental health crisis).

Q: What should happen if the client refuses to give their *explicit consent*?

If a client is unwilling to give their *explicit consent* (including *explicit consent* to complete the Consent Form), then the process cannot continue.

The only exception may be if a third party is legally authorised to give consent on the behalf of a client (for example, in cases where the client lacks the mental capacity to make such a decision).

Health and social care professionals should not complete the DMHEF unless the consumer has given their explicit and written consent for this to happen.

Q: Why doesn't the DMHEF contain a question asking the health or social care professional to estimate when an individual is likely to recover/return to work?

We understand that information about when a client is likely to recover from their mental health problem/return to work would be valuable to some advisers/ creditors.

However, estimates or 'prognoses' of such recovery/return to work are extremely difficult for health and social care professionals to provide:

1. Making a useful and accurate prognosis can be very difficult – consequently, health and social care professionals may be reluctant to make a statement about the likely progression of a person's mental health problem. This may particularly be the case if they do not know the patient (or their wider health or social circumstances) well.
2. Individuals often experience mental health problems in different ways – for example, even though clinical guidelines might indicate that depression usually lasts up to a certain number of months, with the chance of repeated episodes afterwards, there will be many people who do not have this experience.
3. The inter-relationship between mental and physical health can complicate reaching an accurate prognosis – this adds an additional factor to the consideration. It also could involve an examination of the patient (which would require time, resources, and possibly payment).
4. There will be other social and economic factors (often unknown to the health or social care professional) that will impact on a person's recovery from a mental health condition, and which are difficult to incorporate into a prognosis.

Overall, making an accurate and useful prognosis can be very challenging for health and social care professionals. Furthermore, there is the probability that such a prognosis could be inaccurate, which would not help the adviser's understanding, help the creditor create a realistic or sustainable debt arrangement, or the individual get on top of their financial and mental health situation.

Consequently, the DMHEF does not include a 'prognosis question'.

Q: What about people with debt and mental health problems who are not in contact with a health or social care professional?

The DMHEF relies on information being collected from a health or social care professional. However, not every client may be in contact with such a professional.

In these situations, a adviser may wish to recommend that an individual either registers or re-establishes contact with a General Practitioner.

It is important to remember that although an individual does not have contact with a health or social care professional, they may still have a mental health problem.

If a client needs urgent assistance, or is in crisis as a direct result of the current state of their mental health, they (or the person working with them) should contact the Samaritans (see page 14). If they, or anyone else, are in immediate danger of harm, the police emergency number (999) should be called.

If the need is less urgent, the individual concerned or the person working with them can still call the above organisations or call NHS Direct. Alternatively, the person can visit their General Practitioner.

Advisers should also consult and become familiar with their own internal policies on dealing with such emergencies.

Q: It is possible that the client could receive a request for the completion of the DMHEF from a number of advisers and at different times - how could this be avoided?

Advisers should check with the client concerned whether any evidence about their mental health problem has (a) already been recently collected or (b) is about to be collected for another adviser, a creditor, or a different organisation.

The adviser is also strongly recommended to advise their client to send a copy of the completed DMHEF and the signed Consent Form to all their creditors. However, this may not happen in reality.

Q: What happens if the client, having sight of the completed DMHEF from their health or social care professional, wishes to make a personal comment or statement about the information given?

The client can write a personal comment or statement that they supply to their adviser/creditors.

There is no longer any actual space allowed for such comments on the DMHEF, but this should not discourage individuals to comment if they wish.

USEFUL SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Mental Health:

- **Mind** – for information and support on mental health
<http://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/>
- **NHS Choices** – for a range of advice on issues relating to mental health
<http://www.nhs.uk/livewell/mentalhealth/Pages/Mentalhealthhome.aspx>

Suicide and self-harm:

- **Mind** – for guidance on supporting someone who feels suicidal please go to
<http://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/suicide-supporting-someone-else>
- **Samaritans** – The Samaritans are there to talk to at any time, in your own way, and off the record. Call them free at any time on 116 123 or visit their website at <http://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help-you>
- **NHS Choices** – <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Suicide/Pages/Getting-help.aspx>

NHS Helplines:

- **England & Scotland** – NHS 111: is the non-urgent number for out of hours care and information <http://www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/AboutNHSservices/Emergencyandurgentcareservices/Pages/NHS-111.aspx>
<http://www.nhs24.com/111/>
- **Wales** – NHS Direct: 0845 46 47 www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk/
- **Northern Ireland** <http://www.hscni.net/>

Debt advice:

- **National Debtline** – 0808 808 4000 <https://www.nationaldebtline.org/>
- **Business Debtline** – 0800 197 6026 <https://www.businessdebtline.org/>
- **Citizens Advice** – 03444 111 444 <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/>
- **StepChange** – 0800 138 1111 <https://www.stepchange.org/>
- **Christians Against Poverty** - 01274 760720 - <https://capuk.org/>