

# NHSBSA Financial Operations Debt Management Strategy 2023- 2026

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## NHSBSA Finance Operations Debt Management Strategy

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## Introducing our Financial Operations Debt Management Strategy

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I am delighted to present this foreword for the NHSBSA Financial Operations Debt Management Strategy, an essential document outlining our commitment to effective debt management and the responsible stewardship of public funds. In an era of economic challenges and evolving financial landscapes, it is imperative that we adopt a proactive and holistic approach to debt management, one that is rooted in the principles of the Government Functional Standard GovS.014 Debt (GFS). Our top priority has been to align NHSBSA Financial Operations processes with the standards outlined in the GFS, ensuring compliance.

We recognise the vital importance of responsible financial management and are committed to maximising the effectiveness and efficiency of our debt recovery processes. Through a meticulous process, we have designed a strategy that reflects the collective experience of our Financial Operations team and ensures the best possible outcomes for our stakeholders.

NHSBSA Financial Operations focus is on supporting our team and strengthening the organisational culture in Debt Management. This involves enhancing the abilities of our staff to optimise recovery prospects while also ensuring colleagues receive training to complement their ability in handling vulnerable customers.

Crucially, we acknowledge the diverse nature of our customer base. We understand that every individual or organisation facing debt challenges has a unique set of circumstances and needs. Our strategy is rooted in empathy, fairness, and accessibility, recognising that the impact of debt can be felt across all sections of our society.

By adopting a multi-faceted strategy, we aim to strike a delicate balance between robust debt recovery and compassionately supporting those experiencing financial difficulties. As we continue on this journey, we are unwavering in our dedication to protect public funds and will persist in optimising the recovery of debts owed by public bodies to minimise the overall debt owed to the NHSBSA.

In our pursuit of excellence, we embrace the ethos of continuous improvement. We acknowledge that change is constant and that our strategy must evolve with the changing times. By staying at the forefront of best practices, harnessing technological advancements, and adapting to emerging trends, we will continue to develop the Debt Management Strategy ensuring it is resilient and agile.

This Debt Management Strategy represents a shared commitment by NHSBSA Financial Operations to effectively manage debt, protect public funds, and provide a compassionate and efficient service to those navigating the complexities of debt.

I extend my sincere gratitude to the dedicated professionals involved in crafting this strategy, as well as to our stakeholders and partners who have provided invaluable insights and support. Through its implementation, we will strengthen our financial foundations, enhance transparency, and instil trust in our systems and all sections of our society.



**Andy McKinlay. Executive Director of Finance, Commercial & Estates**

## Context

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The NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA) is an Arm's Length Body of the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), responsible for providing platforms and delivering services which support the priorities of the NHS, Government, and local health economies, and in doing so we manage around £43bn of NHS spend annually.

One of the primary objectives of NHSBSA Financial Operations is to manage the recovery of debts owed to the NHSBSA, it's Sponsor and Commissioner. These debts originate from a wide range of customers, including citizens and public bodies.

The strategy sets out the NHSBSA Financial Operations' Strategic Vision, Values and Aims, which reflect our ambition to prevent debt escalation, resolve debt to agreed standards, enforce resolution where proportionate and appropriate and to improve NHSBSA's Financial Operations capability to resolve debt effectively and efficiently.

We strive to achieve fair outcomes for everyone by following best practices, minimising government debt, and providing optimal support to our colleagues and customers.

## Purpose

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The NHSBSA Financial Operations Debt Management Strategy is for use by the NHSBSA's Financial Operations Teams. Its purpose is to establish strategic debt management aims and provide guidelines for managing debt in alignment with:

- (i) The Debt Functional Standard V2 Publication GovS 014: Debt  
[Government Functional Standard - GovS 014: Debt - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-functional-standard-govs-014-debt)
- (ii) HM Treasury (HMT); Managing Public Money (2021)  
[Managing public money - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/managing-public-money)
- (iii) HMG Debt Management Vulnerability Toolkit  
[Debt Management Vulnerability Toolkit](#)

The strategy ensures compliance with government best practices:

The Cross Government Debt Strategy  
[2023-26 Government Debt Strategy - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/2023-26-government-debt-strategy)  
and HM Treasury's Consolidated Budgeting guidance.  
[Consolidated budgeting guidance 2023 to 2024 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/consolidated-budgeting-guidance-2023-to-2024)

NHSBSA Finance Operations regularly reports on Debt Management activity to appropriate Internal Boards and HM Treasury.

It also emphasises the importance of eliminating discrimination, promoting equality, and fostering good relations amongst diverse customer portfolio's.

The strategy should be read alongside related policies and documents:

NHSBSA Financial Operations Vulnerability Policy  
NHSBSA Financial Operations Managing Hard to Collect Debt Policy  
NHSBSA Financial Operations Debt Management Strategy 2023-2026 Delivery Plan  
NHSBSA Customer Charter  
Government Debt Respite Scheme ([Breathing Space](#))

Continuous improvement is a priority, with regular reviews conducted to ensure effectiveness, compliance, and adaptation to service enhancements or government policy changes.

# Our Strategic Vision, Values and Aims



**“To maximise the recovery of debt whilst protecting public funds and providing support to our customers that is effective, efficient, and delivers fair outcomes for all.”**

We will do this by working to a core set of strategic aims aligned to our business strategic values:



## Our values – we CARE

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### **Collaborative**

We work together, share knowledge, engage with wider Government debt management groups to share, and adopt best practice.

### **Adventurous**

We are committed to continuous improvement, adopting innovative approaches and ways of working to maximise the recovery of debt.

### **Reliable**

We deliver a fair, efficient, and effective service to our Customers.

### **Energetic**

We focus on wellbeing and performance in delivering our best every day.

We demonstrate our commitment to the NHSBSA values through the following actions:

- Building open, honest, and respectful relationships with our customers
- Being an enthusiastic and positive team member, taking pride in our work
- Colleagues feeling valued for the role they play in our success
- Colleagues actively developing self and their teams
- Colleagues being creative, open minded to deliver a quality service whilst complying with changing regulatory and legislative requirements
- Focusing on performance to improve NHSBSA Finance Operations capability to resolve debt efficiently and effectively, thus reducing the overall debt owed to Government.

## Our Aims

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### Customer

To provide personalised and compassionate support to customers throughout the debt management process, with the aim of achieving fair and sustainable debt outcomes for all parties involved. This includes resolving debts to agreed standards, offering tailored assistance to help customers manage their debts, and maintaining open communication channels to ensure transparency and fairness throughout the process.



### Our people

To cultivate a skilled and motivated workforce that is equipped to provide the highest level of service to our customers. This includes investing in staff development, fostering a culture of continuous improvement, and collaborating with cross-government working groups to leverage expertise and resources to improve our debt recovery capabilities.

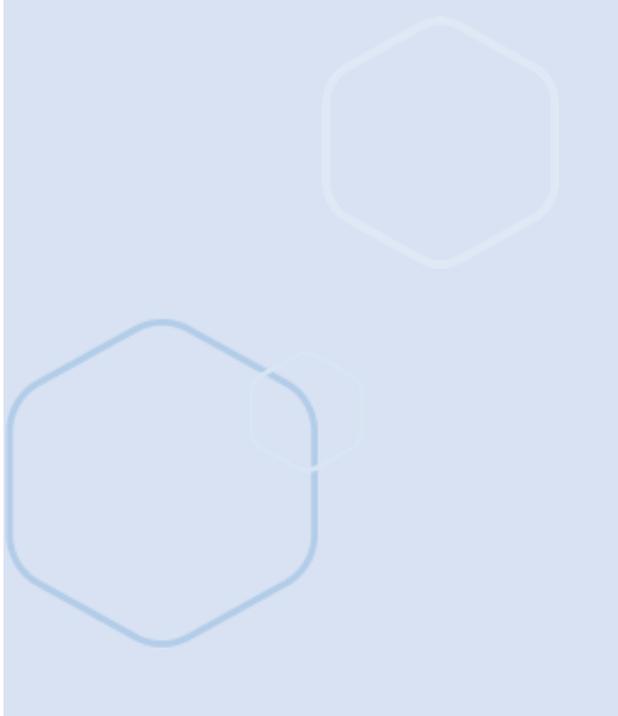


### Value & efficiency

To balance the recovery of debt with responsible and accountable management of government resources, in order to safeguard public funds. We will explore opportunities to consolidate and aggregate functions to achieve economies of scale, while continuously improving our capability to manage debt effectively and efficiently. Our approach will be proactive, with a focus on early intervention and prevention to minimise the risk of debt escalation.

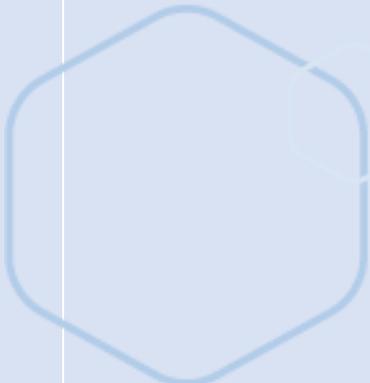
 <b>Strategic aims</b>	 <b>How we will achieve this</b>	 <b>Benefits/targeted outcomes</b>
<div>  </div> <p><b>Customer</b></p> <p><b>Provide support to customers throughout the debt management process</b></p> <p><b>Achieving fair and sustainable debt outcomes for all parties involved</b></p> <div>  </div>	<p>Issue clear and easy to understand communications, using terminology consistently both internally and externally</p> <p>Signpost to third parties or charities who can offer support regarding their finances of any personal circumstances if it falls outside of our scope of expertise</p> <p>Customers who have met their payment obligations are treated equitably</p> <p>Instances of non-compliance are addressed appropriately</p>	<div>  </div> <p>Will help customers better understand their debt situation and the steps they need to take to resolve it</p> <p>Empower customers to better manage their finances and make informed decisions about their debt</p> <p>Build trust and foster positive relationships between the customer and the debt management team</p> <p>Appropriately addressing instances of non-compliance can help prevent further debt accumulation and provide a path towards resolution</p>

	<p>Monitor and evaluate customer service regularly by gathering feedback and make adjustments as necessary</p>	<p>Gathering feedback and making adjustments as necessary can help ensure that customers receive the best possible support and service throughout the debt management process</p>
<p><b>Resolving debts to agreed standards</b></p>	<p>Strike a balance that motivates compliance while considering unique customer circumstances</p>	<p>A fair outcome is achieved for both the customer and the NHSBSA</p>
<p><b>Offering tailored compassionate assistance to help customers manage their debts</b></p> 	<p>Evaluate the payment history to determine whether a customer has consistently fulfilled their repayment obligations</p> <p>Monitor debt characteristics and customer profiles, identify key insights, develop strategies based on the insights. Implement and monitor progress</p>	<p>Early detection of repayment issues can identify potential financial issues and appropriate assistance can be given</p> <p>Help prevent future debt accumulation and provide more effective support to customers in need</p>
	<p>Consistently assess vulnerability and affordability in line with Industry Standards</p>	<p>Ensure that customers receive fair and appropriate treatment, particularly those who may be experiencing financial difficulties</p>
	<p>Tailored assistance with commitment to providing empathetic and non-judgemental support</p>	<p>Help customers manage their debts in a way to suit their individual circumstances</p>

<p><b>Maintain open communication channels to ensure transparency and fairness</b></p> 	<p>Signposting to help customers in financial difficulty</p> <p>Flexible repayment options to achieve sustainable debt resolution</p> <p>Varied methods of communication advertised on all documentation and media channels to meet the diversity of our customer base</p> <p>Being open and honest about debt and debt management options</p> <p>Explore Gov.uk notify SMS service</p>	<p>Empower customers to better manage their finances and make informed decisions about their debt position</p> <p>Provide customers with a greater sense of control and help them achieve sustainable debt resolution</p> <p>Inclusivity for all customers wishing to contact Financial Operations colleagues</p> <p>Enabling customers to make informed decisions about their finances, and build stronger, lasting relationships which can be important in the cases of long-term debts</p> <p>Tailored support to contribute to the financial stability of the customer</p> <p>Personalised communications in real time, timely reminders, accessibility, cost effective</p>
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 Strategic aim	 How we will achieve this	 Benefits/targeted outcomes
<div>  </div> <p><b>Our people</b></p> <p><b>Cultivate a skilled and motivated workforce that is equipped to provide their highest level of service to our customers</b></p> <div>  </div> <p><b>Invest in staff development</b></p>	<p>Develop an induction plan for new colleagues that covers all aspects of debt management and collection across Financial Operations, including best practices, legal requirements, and customer service skills</p> <p>Provide ongoing training and development opportunities for staff involved in debt management, ensuring that they have the necessary skills and knowledge to deliver fair outcomes for all customers</p> <p>Establish a culture of compliance and ethical behaviour across the debt management team</p> <p>Advocate for debt management apprenticeships through HMT's GDMF Functional Centre Working Group</p>	<p>Offer employees valuable learning opportunities and support to succeed in their roles and potentially advance their careers</p> <p>Employees will feel more confident and effective in their roles, which can lead to increased performance</p> <p>Improving customer trust, enhancing employee engagement, promoting accountability, and encouraging innovation</p> <p>Enable employees to develop new skills and competencies to feel supported and</p>

 <p><b>Foster a culture of continuous improvement</b></p>	<p>where standards are being defined and qualifications sought. An apprenticeship program that provides hands-on experience in debt management and collection, allowing colleagues to gain practical skills and knowledge</p> <p>Training and development programmes to upskill the debt management team and improve their capability.</p> <p>Empowering colleagues to proactively support customers in vulnerable circumstances by completing e-learning modules, on-the-job training, and coaching sessions</p> <p>Colleagues to seek training on topics like active listening, empathy, and conflict resolution</p> <p>Continuously develop the performance management system, offering feedback and coaching to employees to enhance their performance</p> <p>Establish metrics and performance indicators to measure the effectiveness of debt management and collection</p>	<p>valued, which can lead to employee attrition Improve job performance, enable career progressions, increase engagement, and improve morale</p> <p>Gained knowledge to enable valuable customer support will generate confidence and satisfaction</p> <p>Better understand and respond to customer needs and resolve conflicts in a constructive manner</p> <p>Enhanced well-being for both employees and customers, as well as increased job satisfaction, can be achieved by implementing early intervention and prevention controls</p> <p>Employees will feel more informed regarding the effectiveness of their output whilst simultaneously being able to identify processes improvement opportunities</p>
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<p><b>Collaborate with cross-government working groups to leverage expertise and resources to improve our debt recovery capabilities</b></p> 	<p>activities and accurate reporting of debt performance</p> <p>Identify areas for collaboration with other Government bodies</p> <p>Representation at HMT's GDMF Functional Centre Working Group platforms</p> 	<p>Provide employees with valuable learning opportunities and potentially lead to improved organisational performance</p> <p>Obtain knowledge about alternative debt management solutions and stay up to date on trends and innovations</p> 
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 Strategic aim	 How we will achieve this	 Benefits/targeted outcomes
<div> </div> <p><b>Value &amp; efficiency</b></p> <p><b>Optimise the recovery of debt</b></p> <div> </div> <p><b>Implement a proactive approach to debt management that focuses on early intervention and prevention</b></p>	<p>Review of collection strategies for recovery of funds</p> <p>Implementation of stringent control measures, risk assessments, and compliance frameworks</p> <p>Analyse current recovery rates and identify areas for improvement</p> <p>Identify, develop, and monitor key performance indicators (KPIs), adjusting as necessary</p>	<p>Ensure debt resolution practices and legislation are relevant, fit for purpose and fair</p> <p>Improve risk management, enhance compliance, improve decision making, increase efficiency and enhance reputation</p> <p>Improve financial position for the NHSBSA and government Reduce hard-to-collect debt</p> <p>Improve performance, enhance efficiency, improve decision making, increase accountability and improve communications Effective use of resources. Ensure colleagues are working towards the same goals</p>

	<p>Sharing relevant data with key stakeholders to improve debt management and prevent future debt issues.</p> <p>Decreasing reliance on enforcement activities through early intervention, prevention, and resolution</p>	<p>Reduce administrative costs associated with collecting hard-to-collect debt. Lowered risk of loss through debt write off</p> <p>Improve customer relationships, increase debt recovery, and reduce costs</p>
<p><b>Prioritise responsible and accountable management of government resources to safeguard public funds</b></p> 	<p>To use public funds efficiently and effectively in compliance with regulatory requirements and governance standards</p> <p>Design and develop a Financial Operations debt profile dashboard</p> <p>Using the Digital Economy Act information sharing powers to improve the delivery of our service to reduce fraud and debt against the organisation</p> <p>Monitor and review debt raised as a result of fraud conviction. Taking into account any Compensation Orders or POCA Confiscation Orders imposed by the court</p>	<p>Improve accountability, operational efficiency, and responsible management of government resources</p> <p>Visibility of debt profile and activities to assist management decisions and demonstrate transparency and accountability to stakeholders</p> <p>Mitigate fraudulent activity and potential loss</p> <p>Improve efficiency and reduce the risk of debt write off</p>

<p><b>Consolidate and aggregate functions to achieve economies of scale</b></p>	<p>Streamline processes, eliminate inefficiencies, and consolidate third party referral activity where applicable</p>	<p>Improve the efficiency of debt management activities Reduce supplier costs due to economies of scale</p> <p>Automate, standardise, and improve procedures that can be applied across the debt management team</p>
<p><b>Resolve and improve our capability to manage debt effectively and efficiently</b></p>	<p>Further develop innovative technologies and data-driven insights</p> <p>Enhance our operational capabilities through continuous improvement initiatives</p> <p>Fostering information sharing and ensuring consistent and accurate reporting of debt performance</p> <p>Further development of clear escalation processes to address overdue debt</p>	<p>Mitigate risks and potential losses resulting in reduced fraud and debt against the organisation</p> <p>Increase productivity and revenue</p> <p>Improve overall organisational performance in debt management</p> <p>Compliant with regulatory requirements and governance standards</p>

## Summary

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A delivery plan has been developed outlining clear milestones and targets to measure progress and ensure accountability of the strategic aims outlined in the strategy; demonstrating our commitment to achieving the intended benefits and desired outcomes.

The strategy will be reviewed by the Head of Financial Operations and at the appropriate board(s) to ensure its effectiveness and compliance and to take any service improvements or wider Government policy changes into account.