

THIS TRANSCRIPT IS ISSUED ON THE UNDERSTANDING THAT IT IS TAKEN FROM A LIVE PROGRAMME AS IT WAS BROADCAST. THE NATURE OF LIVE BROADCASTING MEANS THAT NEITHER THE BBC NOR THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE PROGRAMME CAN GUARANTEE THE ACCURACY OF THE INFORMATION HERE.

MONEY BOX LIVE

Presenter: PAUL LEWIS

TRANSMISSION: 16th DECEMBER 2009 3.00-3.30 RADIO 4

LEWIS: Hello. Shop tills are ringing as Christmas approaches, and louder this year than last, but how much of the money we spend will be ours and how much borrowed from the bank or a finance company? Although consumer credit's falling slightly, between us we still owe nearly £230 billion, which is around £4,800 for each adult, and that's apart from mortgages and loans secured on our homes. So today we're taking your questions on credit and borrowing. Where to get the best deals? What credit to avoid at all costs? And what to do if you can't get credit? While you've been bashing the plastic over Christmas, have you had your card rejected in a shop even though you were within your limit? If you want a new card, what's the best deal? Perhaps you've been refused a loan or a credit card? How do you check your credit rating? And if it's bad, how do you improve it? And what if you simply don't have a credit record? Does that stop you borrowing at all? Whatever your question on credit, you can call Money Box Live now - 03700 100 444. With me today to answer your questions are David Black, a banking specialist from the financial information provider Defaqto; Peter Harrison who's credit card specialist at the comparison site Moneysupermarket.com; and James Jones, the Consumer Education Manager from the credit reference agency Experian. Our first question is from Marjorie in Wiltshire. Marjorie, your question?

MARJORIE: I'm asking about my Tesco credit card, which I took out in the summer. I'm actually building a house, and of course over Christmas there's absolutely no money in the pot and I'm worried about it because I normally pay off

my credit card every month. This one says that it's got 0% interest, but when it comes through it always says that I should pay the minimum and it says 'spending on your account plus any adjustments'.. I don't actually know what the advantage is I've got?

LEWIS: Right. But you have been using the card?

MARJORIE: I've only used it for two large purchases ...

LEWIS: Right.

MARJORIE: ... but now I'm going to have to use it for a lot of large purchases - kitchen, bathroom.

LEWIS: Okay. And you're thinking because it says 0%, you shouldn't have to pay anything?

MARJORIE: Well that's what they said when I took it out. It would be 0% for 12 months.

LEWIS: Okay. David Black from Defaqto.

BLACK: If it's the offer that they're currently doing, and have been for quite a while, it is 0% on purchases for 12 months. Now all credit cards do insist that you make a minimum repayment each month and that will be ... I'm not sure what the Tesco one is off the top of my head. It might be 2, 2.5%, something like that. But what the 0% means is that you aren't actually being charged any interest on any purchases that you make from 12 months from getting the card.

MARJORIE: Fine. So if I spend x amount of money - say £1200 or £1800 or whatever - that will not accrue any interest?

BLACK: Until a year after you've had the card, at which time they will start

charging.

MARJORIE: *(over)* Right. So I should pay the minimum payments back?

BLACK: And just get ready for the end of the year and try and pay the whole lot off then or maybe switch to another card.

MARJORIE: Right.

LEWIS: But 0% doesn't mean you don't have to pay the money back. It just means that you're not actually being charged interest.

MARJORIE: Anything. Okay, thank you. It was just the small print completely threw me.

LEWIS: Okay. James Jones from Experian?

JONES: I think also it's important to note that lenders like Tesco share information on a monthly basis about all their customers with other lenders through credit reference agencies like Experian - so if you don't make at least the minimum payment each month and on time, then you might actually end up with adverse negative information on your credit report. So it's important to do that and perhaps to use direct debits. You can set them to pay just the minimum amount each month to make sure you don't forget.

MARJORIE: It says 3% of outstanding balance.

LEWIS: It's 3%. Okay, so if you spend £1,000, you've got to pay £30 a month. But set up a direct debit.

MARJORIE: Fine. So you put in the minimum on your standing order and that goes on your direct debit, so it goes through automatically?

LEWIS: That's right, yeah that will go through automatically. Peter Harrison of Moneysupermarket, how many 0% cards, are there? I mean 12 months seems quite good for 0% on purchases.

HARRISON: Yes, 12 months 0% on purchases is actually a market leading product, the longest in the UK. We've seen a slight reduction in recent times, but there probably are about 25 to 30 0% purchase cards out there in the market currently.

LEWIS: And important to remember that use it for purchases and it is 0%, but don't use it for anything else like cash or anything like that because it won't be 0% then.

HARRISON: Exactly ...

LEWIS: (*over*) Most of them anyway. So have a card for each deal I think is the general rule, isn't it? Anyway, thank you very much for your question, Marjorie, and we're going to Carolyn now in Bradford. Carolyn, your question?

CAROLYN: Hello. I've just been turned down for quite a small interest free credit arrangement despite the fact that I'm already paying that company for something else in a recent payment. I've looked online at Experian and Equifax and can't see what the problem is. How do I find out why I've been turned down?

LEWIS: Right, that's a very common question. James from Experian?

JONES: It is, Carolyn, and what you need to remember is only the lender that you apply to can actually tell you, can actually give the answer to that question because they're the ones that have made the assessment and come to that decision. Now ...

LEWIS: But they very often won't, will they?

JONES: No, but industry guidelines do encourage lenders to give you at least the principal reason for refusing an application, but you sometimes need to go back and

ask the question. So it's certainly worthwhile doing that. And if they say that information on your credit report was one of the problems, then to check it. But obviously in your case that's not an issue, so I suggest it might be some other information they have at their disposal.

LEWIS: And have you looked at your credit record, Carolyn? Have you actually looked at the whole thing and seen that you know you've got no late payments, no judgements against you or anything like that?

CAROLYN: I can't find anything on there that would seem to me to be a problem. I think there was one ... Of all the stuff that's on there, there was one late payment a month late about 2 years ago of a very small amount.

LEWIS: That's not really likely to make much difference James, is it?

CAROLYN: Well I wouldn't have thought so. I mean I was just totally gob-smacked.

LEWIS: I suppose lenders are getting fussier though, aren't they?

JONES: Many are looking at credit records more closely. But, as I say, you really ought to go back to the lender in the first instance and get some guidance from them and you might find that's quite helpful.

CAROLYN: Are they under any obligation to tell me or only at their discretion?

LEWIS: I think they're obliged to say something, but it's often not very helpful.

JONES: They're obliged to give you the main reason, but that can be something like your credit score wasn't high enough. And of course credit scores are calculated using lots of different information, so that's unfortunately not always massively helpful.

LEWIS: And Peter Harrison, it's not only your credit score, is it? It's also whether

they think they're going to make money out of you?

HARRISON: Exactly. I think in terms of appetite of lending at the moment, there isn't the appetite which there was 2 or 3 years ago, but there's also an understanding of looking at the behaviour and the risk associated to you being the customer.

LEWIS: So no real solid answer, Carolyn, I'm sorry, but ask the lender. And if you don't get anywhere with them, you could always go somewhere else and ask for a loan from someone else who might be more helpful.

CAROLYN: It was for a particular product, so it would have to be through this company.

LEWIS: Right, I understand. Okay. Well I'm sorry we can't give you a definitive answer, but you've done a lot of the work. Little bit more to do to see if you can get any further. I suppose you could also just try writing to the chief executive and saying you're a good customer. Why won't he lend you the money? See what happens.
Emma Meads from Nottingham, your question?

EMMA: Hello there. Our car's broken down and it's irreparable and we need to get a new car. So we need to get a new car and I need to know really what's the best way of doing it - whether I should get a loan ...? We need to get a loan, so whether I put it on my mortgage, go higher purchase, or actually just get a loan from the bank? We've got a good credit rating - we've had loans before that we've completely paid back, so there's no issue on actually getting it - but it's the best way to put it really.

LEWIS: Right. Certainly in the past, the advice was borrow from your bank. It's usually cheapest. But, David Black, what's the best way to borrow a few thousand pounds for a car?

BLACK: That's actually a very difficult thing to answer. I did hear you say, Emma, that you were thinking of putting it in your mortgage.

EMMA: Yeah.

BLACK: Now, okay, the rate might be lower, but you're effectively going to be repaying that over 25 years, so you'll find it's an awful lot of money. So I'd be a bit wary about doing that.

EMMA: Okay.

BLACK: Unsecured loan is a possibility. If you borrowed £5,000 over 2 years, the average amount you'd have to repay from the loans available would be round about £236 a month every month for the 2 years. Higher purchase, you would have to look at the deal that was on offer. If you were buying it from a garage or a dealer, they probably have specific deals and they may or may not be competitive.

LEWIS: Yeah, my general rule of borrowing, Emma, is you only borrow for the length of time the object will last. So if you borrow for a car, 25 years probably is too long. 3 years might be better. *(laughs)*

EMMA: Yes.

LEWIS: And, as David said, the averages are quite high. There are best buys. Just looking at them, I think Alliance & Leicester is offering about 9%, which would be £160 a month. And always be very careful about Payment Protection Insurance. Peter Harrison, Payment Protection Insurance, is it normally added on routinely as it used to be?

HARRISON: There's been a change in legislation recently where the lenders can't actually sell it to you in the first 14 days, increasing the transparency, but it's well worth looking into what's the better Payment Protection Insurance policy for your needs and potentially not with the lender that you take your card or loan out with.

LEWIS: It's always bad value with the lender, isn't it? You should always go

somewhere else if you want it. But certainly shop around, go to one of the comparison sites like Moneysupermarket or indeed there are others - Moneyfacts and the FSA I think even has one, though whether it covers loans I can't tell you at this precise moment. Sorry, James, you want to add something.

JONES: Yeah, just to interject. Emma, you say you've got a very good credit rating. I just wonder whether ... I mean most of us would say you know we feel we're very credit worthy, no-one admits to *not* being credit worthy. I wonder whether you'd actually checked your credit history?

EMMA: We haven't. It's just that we've never been late for anything. We've had loans and paid them back. If we've ever done the interest free credit, we've actually done it and then paid it off before we've had to start paying for things. We've never missed a payment.

LEWIS: So you've never been late with a payment?

EMMA: No, never.

JONES: Right, it sounds like you probably have. But it might be worth just checking the information, making sure it's accurate and up to date, that you're on the electoral register, all those sorts of things, just because you know a discrepancy can be the difference between getting the rate you want and getting a worse rate.

EMMA: Oh actually change the rate that you ...? Okay.

LEWIS: Yes, I think that's a point worth making - that it's not just whether you get a loan or not; it's getting the best rate. The better your credit record, the more chance there is of getting one of those best rates that I mentioned like you know just under 9%. There are three lenders just under 9%, and to get that you have to have a pretty near perfect credit rating.

JONES: And there's lots of guidance on our website on the things to look for when you do check your credit report.

HARRISON: I was just about to say ...

LEWIS: Peter, yes.

HARRISON: ... eight out of the nine high street banks currently only lend to their existing customer base. So in terms of supply - we mentioned Alliance & Leicester, Tesco and Sainsbury's - there isn't a lot of choice out there in terms of unsecured loans at the moment.

LEWIS: Right, so even though they're in the best buy tables, they might not lend to you because you're not a customer?

HARRISON: Yes.

EMMA: Thank you.

LEWIS: Important thing to look out for. Anyway good luck with that Emma, and I hope you get your loan and indeed your car. Irving from Wakefield has a question. What is it, Irving?

IRVING: Hello. Well my question seems to refute the advice that you gave to your first caller. I've had a problem with Thomas Cook credit cards since September. They sent me some credit card cheques and offered me 9 months interest free credit. So I put in £6,000 using one of their cheques to replace my car. Then I sent them a cheque for £950 with a letter because they've started charging me interest, and I said I didn't think I should pay interest. They replied to my letter, but didn't mention the cheque and they said they've never received the cheque. And ever since then, they've been charging me interest. I spoke to their customer adviser and they said the way that they credit the interest is when I send them money - and I've always paid my bill every

month to avoid charges - they say that my payments first of all go to paying the sum with the least interest charge. Consequently, I'm paying interest every month now and it looks as though I can never get out of paying the interest.

LEWIS: Yes, I'm afraid you have been caught by a very common trap, Irving. Credit card cheques are ... there are rather strict controls going to be introduced on them very soon. They can trap you like that. David Black?

BLACK: Yes, it's probably worth adding that the vast majority of credit cards available, when you make a repayment it does go to the cheapest debt first. There are a couple of exceptions, which we must applaud - Nationwide Building Society and Saga. But I mean it might help you if you've got a reasonable credit rating to try and do a balance transfer. There are some 0% deals around. They do unfortunately have a balance transfer fee, which is ...

IRVING: (*over*) Yes, I went into my bank yesterday and they'll give me, transfer the money, but there's a 3% handling fee. And I'm still in dispute with the bank because they said they would come back to me about this missing cheque, which they haven't done and I've written to them.

LEWIS: Well if you don't get a satisfactory answer within 8 weeks, then you can go the Financial Ombudsman Service. And I really recommend you do that because it does sound as if you've been badly treated. But the order of payments, which David mentioned, is a particular concern. Peter Harrison, it's almost universal, isn't it, that the cheapest debt is taken first? So if you've got a 0% deal, never ever buy anything else on it, don't use anything else with it, because you'll get hammered for the high rate of interest.

HARRISON: Yeah. Unfortunately Moneysupermarket.com did some research recently revealing that two-thirds of customers didn't actually know that their repayments go to the cheapest debt first. Slightly disappointing and we're all aware of the legislation changes, which have been proposed within the last 6 to 8 weeks, which we support.

LEWIS: Yes. Well let's hope that happens. I'm sorry about those problems, Irving, but I do recommend ... Make a formal complaint and then go to the Financial Ombudsman. David, do you want to add something briefly?

BLACK: Just a really quick addition. If you have one of these 0% deals, you're better off generally just using it for say the purchase or the balance transfer or whatever it is and get another card for everything else.

LEWIS: And the problem with credit card cheques is that they can actually count as a cash withdrawal ...

BLACK: Most of them will do.

LEWIS: ... and that's why they're very, very expensive. They're not like using your credit card, I'm afraid, though the implication is that they are and they're absolutely not. Thank you very much for that, Irving. I'm sorry you're having those problems. I'm sure a lot of other people share those views. Just before we go to the next call, let me take an email which has just come in. I've had a number of emails, a lot of emails coming in now. 'I've been harassed by a company that suggests it can get your credit card agreement declared non-binding and the balance written off.' This is from Andy. 'But they want to charge upfront. Can they do that?' David?

BLACK: I suspect that is what is called an Independent Voluntary Arrangement that they're trying to foist upon him.

LEWIS: No, I think actually this is something different. This is where they suggest that people haven't conformed with the Consumer Credit Act, I think.

JONES: There's been a growth in what we refer to as claims management companies and they you know advise people on potentially wriggling out of debts because of the way that, for instance, the credit agreement's been drafted. I would say that you should be very careful. Many of the claims made by these organisations are dubious.

They are regulated by the Ministry of Justice, and the Ministry of Justice has actually closed down quite recently about a hundred of these firms for making misleading claims. So I would say be very, very careful indeed.

LEWIS: Yeah, I think there's a test case which has gone through. We're expecting the result in January. So treat them with care. Treat anyone with care who wants money upfront with no guarantee of what they'll achieve would be my advice on that, Andy. Let's go onto Steve now who's calling from Nottingham.

STEVE: Hi, good afternoon.

LEWIS: Steve, your question?

STEVE: Just a quick one. Earlier this year, my business failed and as a result of it I was declared bankrupt. That was in the January. About 6 to 8 weeks ago now, I had an early discharge and so that's all gone through now. Two questions really. One: what the hell can I do to try and sort out my credit rating? I should add I don't actually want to take out any more credit now. Having been bitten once, it's really nice paying for things. And then the second thing revolves round the attitude or the process really behind the credit rating agencies. With having Experian there, that's quite interesting. I wouldn't whip those on their own, but when I've gone to them to actually query the information they've got, they've always said to me you've got to go back to the company that's reporting the information.

LEWIS: Okay, let's get James to answer that. I mean I think there's a couple of questions really there that need answering. James?

JONES: There are. I mean bankruptcy for a start isn't wiping the slate clean because the information on your credit report is a factual record of your financial dealings over the past 6 years, so the bankruptcy record will stay on your credit report. Of course it should be marked as discharged now that that's happened. The debts that led to this

...

LEWIS: But it will stay there?

JONES: It will stay there still for ...

LEWIS: So it will form part of your credit record and indeed affect your credit score?

JONES: It will and it will have a major effect, I'd suggest, on a credit score at least for a few years. I mean lenders do look more closely at your recent sort of credit behaviour, so over time its effect on your score might reduce. But at the same time, the debts that led to the bankruptcy will be registered as separate credit agreements on your report, but now that the bankruptcy has been cleared, those debts should also be marked as satisfied. So I mean if that's not the case, then you can either contact those lenders direct and ask them to update all the credit reference agencies, or you can come to us individually and ask us to actually dispute the entries for you and liaise on your behalf.

LEWIS: But hang on a minute, James. If you're publishing information that says this hasn't been discharged, and it has, isn't that libellous against the person you're saying that about?

JONES: Well by law, the information we hold has to be accurate and up to date and we work with lenders very closely.

LEWIS: So if it's not accurate?

JONES: Then it should be corrected. So if we're told, if we're notified by a consumer that the information is out of date, then we should take action. We should flag the information as disputed while we go off and investigate it with the lenders concerned. So certainly, Steve, that's the advice I would give you.

LEWIS: Yes.

STEVE: One of the problems that I have is though when I went back - and not just picking on your company because there have been others as well - you showed in January of this year, quite correctly so, I was declared bankrupt. Fine. But you then showed that there were debts that have gone on for let's say from 2006 with green dots on the line being paid all the time, which they were, and you now show them as being red every month. Now you know that in January I was declared bankrupt and, therefore, they were wound up as part of that. Why do I now have this mammoth exercise to approach all these companies to try and resolve it when you're saying on the one hand this guy was bankrupt, his debts were stopped, and then you carry on reporting them as being overdue?

JONES: Well the data on your credit report, Steve, is as it's being reported by all the different lenders that you've had agreements with. But certainly, as I say, if you come to us and tell us what the problems are, tell us which lenders you're unhappy with, we will actually sort of contact all of them on your behalf, so we can do a lot of the legwork for you.

LEWIS: Yeah, I mean this is a matter of dispute, isn't it? I know there's been court cases, but I mean you're a publisher, just as the BBC is a publisher, and if I said something about somebody was a debtor and they weren't on air, I'd be in trouble. And you're saying people are debtors because you should really correct that information as soon as the bankruptcy has gone through, shouldn't you?

JONES: I mean there are lots of issues here. We don't technically publish the data because it's only available to organisations that actually share the data through us.

LEWIS: *(laughs)* Alright. Yeah, okay, well we won't pursue that. But anyway, Steve, I think a strong letter to the three credit reference agencies, which are (apart from Experian who is being pilloried here but in fact has been kind enough to come on the programme) there's also Equifax and there's Call Credit. And I think you have an interesting point. James, you're going to make one more point.

JONES: Sorry. Steve, can I just say if you go to our website, there's a fact sheet that

we've put together on bankruptcy and there's lots of useful advice on there to help you actually put your credit rating back together, so I'd urge you to have a look and that and I hope that's helpful.

LEWIS: Right. And it's worth stressing, finally, 6 years it will take before it's finally off the record, which is obviously what affects people. Lesley from Suffolk has got a call now.

LESLEY: Hello. I think my question may be related to the previous email you mentioned. I'm ex-directory and I get phoned up three times a day by firms talking about credit and government policy, saying that they can wipe off any money from your credit cards.

LEWIS: Yes, I think this is the point we made earlier. Let me say one thing, Lesley. If you're getting calls from people, there is something called the Telephone Preference Service, which you can find online if you have access to the computer, and you can put your number on there, which means it's actually unlawful for any Europe based company, including UK based, to phone you at all on a cold call basis. So that might help stop the calls. But, as we said earlier, there is a court case on this and we're waiting for the result on these companies.

LESLEY: So you can't tell me ... I mean they say if you've taken out over £3,000, they can wipe it off. I mean I haven't got that much on my credit card anyway, but are they generally scams?

LEWIS: Well it's impossible to say if anyone who rings you up is a scam, but certainly companies that ask for fees to get rid of your debt may be trying to get money out of you rather than solving the problem. But there are some respectable companies. And David, you mentioned IVAs earlier. This may well be that rather than the wiping off the debt completely that we talked about. These Individual Voluntary Arrangements.

BLACK: Yes, that's whereby you or your adviser - Citizen's Advice might help you

on this - will come to an arrangement if you're having difficulty making repayments. But it's a serious thing to think about. Just be quite careful.

LEWIS: But, Lesley, you haven't actually got a big debt that you're worried about?

LESLEY: No, no, it's just I wondered whether ...

LEWIS: Right, well if you haven't got a big debt that you're worried about, much better to pay it off in the normal way and not go to anybody who's offering to wipe it out because it's your debt, you have to pay it; and if you can afford it, that's what you should do.

HARRISON: It just sounds like it's too good to be true.

LEWIS: Peter, yes sorry. It sounds like it's too good to be true; and if something's too good to be true, it probably is, which is the Money Box motto. Thanks very much for your call, Lesley. Nick is calling us from Cobham.

NICK: Hello, hi.

LEWIS: Your question, Nick?

NICK: I have some credit cards that I don't use anymore. There's no balances on them and I want to know if by cancelling them, it would affect my credit history at all?

LEWIS: Right, James Jones?

JONES: Okay Nick, well the answer basically is no. And depending on the other sort of credit products you currently have open, it might be a very sensible thing to do - certainly in the current climate - because if you apply for new credit, a lender will not only look to see how much you owe, but also how much credit you've already got,

whether or not you're using it. And of course lenders are under increasing pressure to lend responsibly as well as at the same time trying to repair their fragile balance sheets, so they will look at this and take it into consideration. So you know if you could potentially access more credit than you could afford, then you might find a new lender says no.

LEWIS: David Black?

BLACK: Just as an add-on to that, it's also worth saying that if you cancel a credit card and let them know you don't want it anymore, between 6 and 9 months later you can go back to that credit card company and take up another introductory offer. And the credit card industry's quite strange at the moment because it seems to much prefer offering the best deals to new customers. So if you can become a new customer by simply cancelling a credit card and waiting for a few months, it's worth a go.

LEWIS: Yes and also a lot of credit cards are related to each other, aren't they, and some of the best deals you go for you might not get because you've got a related card? So probably better to cancel cards that you don't really use. Cut them up, put the bits in separate bags - I'm a bit paranoid about things like that - and write to them and cancel them. Thanks very much for your call, Nick. Quickly now to Delphine in London. If you could just be very brief, Delphine.

DELPHINE: I will. I was wondering if you could tell me something about the advantages and disadvantages of prepaid credit cards?

LEWIS: Ah right.

DELPHINE: I've seen them come up at my local shop.

LEWIS: They're a very big business now. They're not technically credit cards.

DELPHINE: Okay.

LEWIS: Who wants to start on this? Peter, I think you know about these.

HARRISON: I think prepaid cards are an alternative source for people who want to use cards for purchasing products. I think the pros are obviously that you don't need to do a credit check on those products and they can be bought straightaway. However, it's worthwhile looking at the costs associated to prepaid cards because you can be charged for making a purchase at a shop, for cash withdrawals, as well as some recurring fees, including monthly fees for using the card. So there are pros and cons of using a prepaid card.

LEWIS: And it's worth saying that they're not credit cards. You have to put the money on first and then you can spend it. And of course some of them charge you for loading the money on, don't they? David?

BLACK: There are various charges. It might be for loading it. It might be for using it certain places. Just for having it even.

LEWIS: But the advantage is if you've got a bad credit record, you can get one. James, do these help in any way with your credit record?

JONES: Well I think there's one that's called a credit builder, which has an annual fee, but basically that's paid by a loan and you pay it off in instalments over the first year. And that's reported to Experian - so if you actually pay that on time, then that can certainly help your credit history. Of course it's only a very small loan, so the effect is going to be quite minor, but you know if you've got very little information on your credit report, then that can help.

LEWIS: So, Delphine, a good idea and for some people helps you control your money, but can be expensive I think is the summary there. Michael ... We are going to squeeze one more call in. Michael, very briefly please, what's your question?

MICHAEL: I'm a self-employed electrician. Don't have a mortgage, own a home,

don't have a loan. The only people who offer me credit cards give me extremely high rates. I want to know which is the best option to go for? If I want credit for my company, I can get it from the wholesalers. If I want it personally, it's very difficult.

LEWIS: Okay, best buy credit cards? Peter Harrison?

HARRISON: Can I just ask, what do you want to use the credit card for?

MICHAEL: Well at the moment if I purchase holidays or anything like that, I don't have any insurance for it let's say if the holiday company goes bust or BA refuse a flight. So if I have a credit card to make purchases, then they're insured from that, which is the main reason.

HARRISON: Are you intending to pay that balance off in full or lend from that?

MICHAEL: In full straightaway, hopefully.

HARRISON: Okay. What I was about to suggest, actually maybe a lending card isn't the right way to go, but potentially a reward or cashback card. I think the great thing about credit cards, they're multiple needs, but if you're planning on intending paying the balance in full, then a reward card or a cashback card such as American Express, which is the market leading cashback card.

LEWIS: Yeah, and if you're paying it off in full, you don't need to worry about rates. Thanks very much for your call, Michael. We have run out of time. My thanks to Peter Harrison of MoneySupermarket.com, David Black from Defaqto, and James Jones from Experian. Thanks for all your calls and emails. More about credit and borrowing with the BBC Action Line - 0800 044 044. Our website, bbc.co.uk/moneybox, where you can listen to the programme again, download a copy, get the podcast, and in a couple of days read a transcript. I'm back here at noon on Saturday with Money Box, and to take more of your calls on Money Box Live next Wednesday afternoon. Subject: giving to charity.