

*in*vested interests

NEW YEAR 2026 ISSUE



**New Year.
New Opportunities.**

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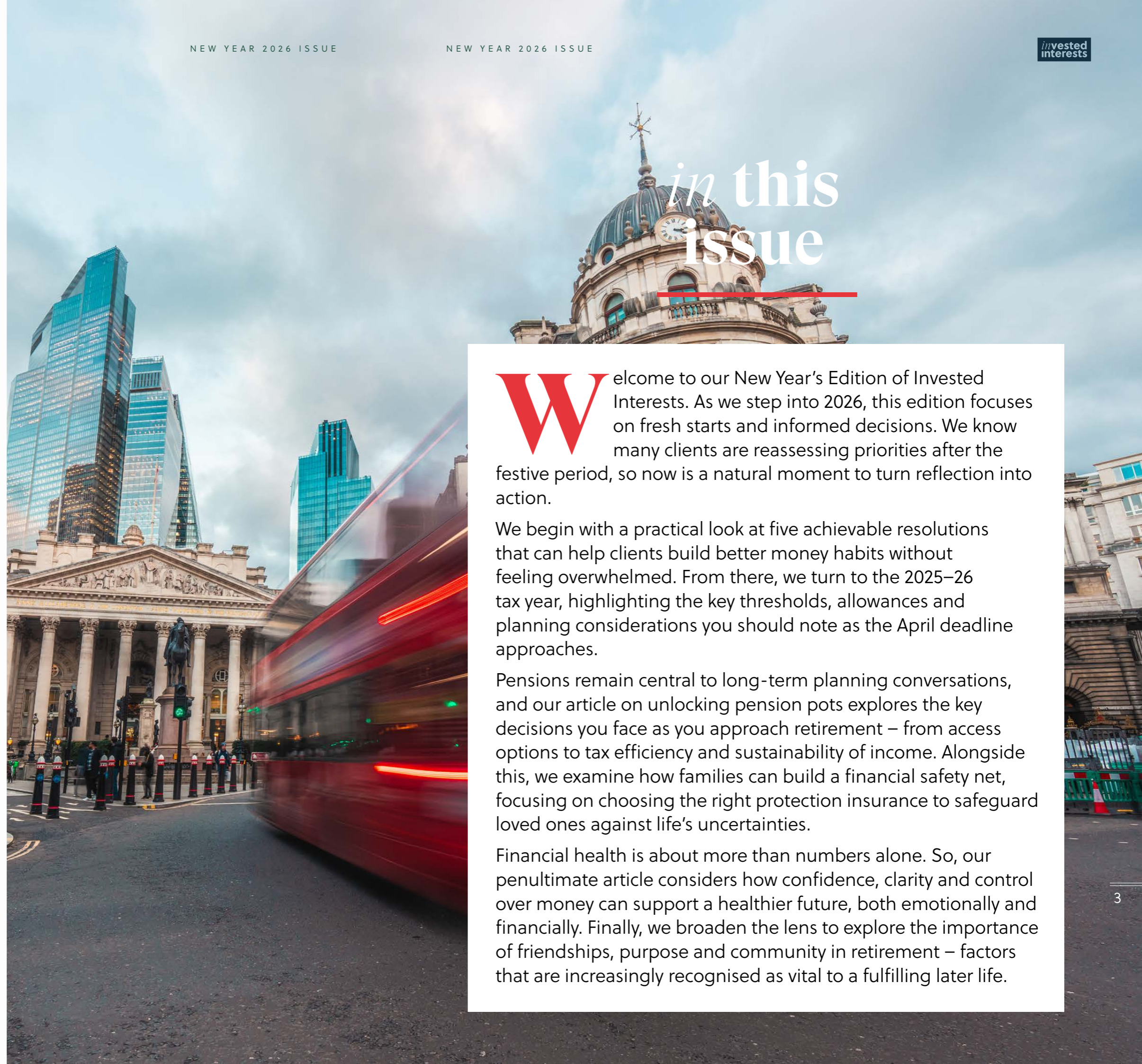
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in this issue

Welcome to our New Year's Edition of Invested Interests. As we step into 2026, this edition focuses on fresh starts and informed decisions. We know many clients are reassessing priorities after the festive period, so now is a natural moment to turn reflection into action.

We begin with a practical look at five achievable resolutions that can help clients build better money habits without feeling overwhelmed. From there, we turn to the 2025–26 tax year, highlighting the key thresholds, allowances and planning considerations you should note as the April deadline approaches.

Pensions remain central to long-term planning conversations, and our article on unlocking pension pots explores the key decisions you face as you approach retirement – from access options to tax efficiency and sustainability of income. Alongside this, we examine how families can build a financial safety net, focusing on choosing the right protection insurance to safeguard loved ones against life's uncertainties.

Financial health is about more than numbers alone. So, our penultimate article considers how confidence, clarity and control over money can support a healthier future, both emotionally and financially. Finally, we broaden the lens to explore the importance of friendships, purpose and community in retirement – factors that are increasingly recognised as vital to a fulfilling later life.

New Year, New Finances:

5 RESOLUTIONS FOR BETTER MONEY MANAGEMENT

January is the ideal time to start getting your finances in order. Many people feel like a fresh start following the holiday season and the excess that comes with it. There is also enough time left until the end of the tax year to take advantage of the various allowances.

Please note: The information in this article is for general purposes only and does not constitute financial, investment, or tax advice. Tax treatment depends on individual circumstances and is subject to change. Pension and investment values can go up and down, and your capital is at risk. Seek independent financial advice before making any financial decisions.

If you would like to get your finances in shape this year, start by setting some goals. What would you like to achieve in the short, medium, and long-term? What is really important to you? With this in mind, you can start to review the individual components of your financial plan.

Review Your Budget

The first step is to understand how much money you have coming in and going out every month. Make a list of all income (net of tax) and expenditure appearing on your bank statement.

If you have a surplus, this is good news. You can start to think about how to put the extra money to work.

If you have a deficit, you will need to address this before you can consider other areas of financial planning. Left unchecked, a budget shortfall can lead to debt and further hardship down the line. Check your bank statement for any unused subscriptions or expensive services. Is there anything you can cancel for a quick financial boost? It's worth shopping around for the best deals and thinking carefully about any purchases.

You should also consider options for earning more money. Perhaps this is the year you will seek a promotion, move jobs, or start the side business you have been considering.

Make a Plan for Debt

Sometimes, certain types of debt can be helpful - e.g. if it gives you an asset that improves your financial position, such as buying a property or investing in your education.

However, it can be destructive when it is used to fund a lifestyle beyond your means. Relying on credit for discretionary spending is one of the quickest ways to derail your financial security.

If you have consumer debt, this could be a good time to assess your position and make a plan for clearing it. It might not happen overnight, but committing to a budget and repayment plan will vastly improve your position by this time next year.

Build an Emergency Fund

An emergency fund is a vital part of a financial plan. Ideally, you should aim

to keep at least 6 months' expenditure in an easily accessible bank account.

This means that if an unexpected bill or repair comes up, you are prepared and do not need to rely on debt. It also means that if you are unable to work for a short period, you will have some money set aside to cover essential costs.

You can dip into your emergency fund as needed (that is what it's for!), but you should aim to rebuild it as soon as possible. Any cash required for short-term spending (for example, holidays or home improvements) should ideally be held in a separate account.

Address Risks

As well as planning for short-term emergencies, it is important to think about other financial risks and put appropriate protections in place. For example:

- Life cover to ensure that your family is provided for in the event of your death.
- Critical illness cover to provide a financial cushion if you are injured or seriously ill.
- Income protection to replace your earnings if you are unable to work for a long period due to illness or disability.

While not every risk can be covered, having appropriate protection can mean there is one less thing to worry about if things go wrong in the future.

If you already have insurance policies in place, it might be a good idea to check you have enough cover and that you are not overpaying for your premiums.

Invest for the Future

To achieve your goals and provide a comfortable future lifestyle, you will likely need to invest. Cash alone is unlikely to keep pace with inflation and can actually lose money in real terms.

The easiest way to invest is through a workplace pension scheme. If you are eligible, you will be automatically enrolled in the scheme. There will generally be a default fund to invest in, although you may have some other options. The main advantage of a workplace scheme is that your employer needs to contribute as well.

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If you don't have access to a workplace scheme or would like to make additional contributions, you can also set up a personal pension. Your pension will benefit from tax relief whether you set it up yourself or via your employer.

A Stocks and Shares ISA is another option for medium or long-term investing. You can contribute up to £20,000 per year for tax-free growth. Unlike pensions, there is no tax relief available on contributions, but you do have unlimited, tax-free access to your money.

Depending on your circumstances, both pensions and ISAs could have an important role in your financial plan. If you have a larger amount or a lump sum to invest, you may also want to consider investment accounts or investment bonds for some of the money.

Regardless of which investment vehicle you are using, there are a few key rules for a sound investment plan:

- Invest for the long-term. Taking money out early can reduce your returns.
- Avoid trying to time the market or make judgment calls about which investments are likely to do well. This takes up a great deal of time, and even professional investors often get it wrong.
- Diversify your investments across a wide range of asset classes, sectors, and world regions.
- Invest at an appropriate risk level. This takes into account not only how you feel about risk, but how much you could afford to lose if the market takes a downturn.
- Review your plan regularly and make sure you are on track to achieve your goals. If you need to contribute more or adjust your risk level, the earlier you do this, the more impact it will have.

Please do not hesitate to contact a member of the team if you would like to find out more about financial planning.

Navigating the 2025-26 Tax Year: What It Means for Your Money

In light of the 2025 Autumn Budget, it seemed high time to revisit the tax landscape in 2025-26 and give you an update on your financial planning landscape.



The recent budget, in a sense, was nothing new – bringing familiar themes such as frozen thresholds, rising effective tax burdens and more focus on “fairness”. However, some specific changes will affect clients’ take-home pay, savings and investment decisions.

This article highlights the main issues you should be aware of as we move into 2026 and offers practical planning angles you can discuss with your financial adviser.

Income tax and frozen thresholds

One notable announcement in the Autumn Budget was the extension of the income tax band “freeze” to 2031 (three years after the original April 2028 deadline).

This changes little for 2025-26, since the tax bands were expected to remain static anyway. However, it could mean more of your income is dragged into tax (e.g. if your pay goes up).

In 2025-26, the standard tax-free Personal Allowance remains at £12,570. Also, the main income tax bands in England, Wales and Northern Ireland are unchanged in cash terms:

- 20% basic rate (income between £12,571 and £50,270)
- 40% higher rate (£50,271 to £125,140)
- 45% additional rate (for income above £125,140)

In Scotland, the multi-tier structure continues, with different rates and bands for starter, basic, intermediate, higher, advanced and top rates.

The freezing of income tax bands creates “fiscal drag” – also known as a “stealth tax” – as average wages go up. For instance, due to forecasted UK wage growth in the coming years, as many as 920,000 people could be pulled into paying the 40% higher rate by 2031.

Navigating taxes

As financial advisers, part of our role is to help you navigate these kinds of stealth taxes prudently. The aim isn’t to escape your responsibilities, but to ensure you don’t overpay when you have so many other financial obligations (family, charitable giving, etc).

In particular, we can examine your current financial position, where your income sits in the bands and map out different model scenarios – e.g. how to mitigate a needless tax liability if you are close to a key financial “cliff edge”, such as the effective 60% rate between £100,000 and £125,140 (due to Personal Allowance tapering).

Tax-efficient wrappers

The Autumn Budget brought more taxes on savings and dividend income. As such, using available tax shelters is even more valuable. Key actions to revisit with your adviser include:

- Making full use of ISA allowances, so that interest, dividends and gains within the ISA remain free of further UK tax.
- Ensuring general investment accounts are structured efficiently. For example, some clients might benefit from sheltering higher-yielding or dividend-heavy holdings in tax-advantaged wrappers (where possible).
- Reviewing whether clients should shift more into ISAs or pensions ahead of planned rate increases – especially if they are likely to exceed personal savings allowances or dividend allowances.

For wealthier or more sophisticated investors, updated limits and rules around schemes such as EIS and VCTs are scheduled to become more generous from April 2026. These may be worth exploring with an adviser.

Pension contributions and allowances

Pensions remain one of the most powerful tools for reducing current tax and building long-term financial security.

There was one blow from the Autumn Budget on this front, however. Chancellor Reeves announced that, from April 2029, salary-sacrificed pension contributions would be “capped” at £2,000 per year. Above that, you (and your employer) will not enjoy National Insurance (NI) exemption on contributions. In effect, they will be treated as ordinary employee pension contributions by the UK tax system (e.g. 8% on earnings below £50,270).

This is expected to affect 20% of the UK workforce, although few workers seem to understand how salary sacrifice works – and the significance of this change.

Given that the system is not set to change until April 2029, now may be a good time to take full advantage of current salary sacrifice rules while they last.

Speak with your financial adviser to explore this in light of the complete, most up-to-date information (and taking into account your own personal goals and circumstances).

Your adviser can also add value by modelling the trade-off between net cost now and future retirement income, particularly for clients near key thresholds who can benefit most from higher-rate relief.



➔ **Capital gains and timing decisions**

The 2025-26 year is still shaped by reductions to capital gains tax (CGT) allowances in previous tax years. As such, if you have significant unrealised gains in taxable portfolios, second properties or business interests, consider talking to an adviser about:

- Whether to use what remains of your annual CGT exempt amount (rather than allowing large gains to accumulate).
- Phased disposals, "bed-and-ISA" strategies and transfers between spouses or civil partners (to make better use of two sets of allowances and potentially lower rates).
- Balancing CGT planning against other priorities such as income needs, risk tolerance and diversification.

The continued pressure on allowances underlines the benefit of ongoing, incremental planning rather than one-off actions close to deadlines.

Property, landlords and high-value homes

Landlords continued to be targeted by the government in the 2025 Autumn Budget, which announced:

- New, higher tax rates on certain forms of property income from 2027, and
- A planned High Value Council Tax Surcharge from 2028 on properties in England worth £2 million or more.

Although these measures are not fully in force in 2025-26, they are relevant to current planning. Landlords may wish to reassess the viability of highly leveraged portfolios and explore strategies with an adviser, such as:

- Incorporation
- Restructuring
- Partial disposals

These should be considered while also accounting for CGT and mortgage conditions.

An adviser can help you scenario-plan for these changes so that adjustments can be made gradually rather than under time pressure.

We hope this overview of pension options in 2025-26 has helped to clarify your options for securing the future retirement lifestyle you want.

Please don't hesitate to contact a member of the team to find out more about financial wellbeing.

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UNLOCKING YOUR PENSION POT

KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR RETIREMENT



→ Retirement planning is so much more than just putting money into a pension each month. It's not just about how big you can grow your nest egg - it's how you use it wisely.

Small, early decisions with your pension can have a significant impact on your future income, tax bill and financial security - particularly due to the power of compound interest.

As such, the sooner you arm yourself with financial knowledge and build strong habits with your retirement planning, the more likely you will achieve your later-life goals.

This article outlines the key ways you can take benefits from your pension pot, the main pros and cons and the questions to explore with your financial planner before making decisions.

Our aim is not to push you towards one "best" answer. Instead, we want to help you understand the landscape in 2025-26 so you can make informed choices that support a comfortable, sustainable retirement - reflecting your goals, values and appetite for risk.

The pension freedoms landscape

Since 2015, savers in the UK have had a wider range of choices when approaching their pensions. The introduction of the "pension freedoms" meant that many people with defined contribution (DC) pensions now have greater flexibility over how and when they access their savings. Broadly, from your minimum pension age (NMPA - currently 55, rising to 57 in 2028), you can usually:

- Take up to 25% of your pot tax-free (subject to limits and rules).
- Use some or all of the rest to provide a retirement income in different ways, including drawdown, annuities, lump sums or a combination.

However, with flexibility comes responsibility. The choices you can make are powerful, but mistakes can be costly. This can be especially true if you withdraw too much, pay more tax than necessary, or take risks that do not fit your situation.

Understanding your pension pot

There are many different types of pensions in the UK. To get the most out of them, it helps to understand how they operate and where they can fit into a broader retirement plan:

Defined contribution (DC)

These schemes typically involve making regular contributions (e.g. monthly) to a "pot" that you can access after reaching your NMPA.

Employers usually contribute to workplace DC pensions, but some people set up their own private (or "personal") pensions, which they typically contribute to themselves.

Your retirement pot is based on contributions and investment returns. You decide how to access it within the rules.

Defined benefit (DB, or "final salary")

Your pension income is usually set by a formula based on your salary and years of service, rather than an individual pot.

There is no "pot" of money that you draw from. Instead, your former employer (e.g. the government, if you were a teacher or police officer) pays you a "salary" in retirement.

These types of pension are increasingly rare in 2025-26. They are often dubbed "gold-plated" pensions due to their generous, hard-to-replicate perks (e.g. competitive yearly income that rises with/above inflation).

This article focuses on DC pensions. This is where most of the flexibility (and decision-making) sits when it comes to pension planning.

If you have a DB pension, a financial planner can help you understand any entitlements and how they fit alongside your DC pots, the State Pension and other assets.

Main options for DC pensions

For DC pensions, there are four broad ways to use your pot:

- Flexi-access drawdown.
- Annuity purchase.
- Ad-hoc or regular lump sum withdrawals.
- Leaving it invested for later.

You do not have to choose just one. Many people combine options over time. For instance, using drawdown initially and buying an annuity later, or keeping some funds untouched for later life care or legacy goals.

Flexi-access drawdown

With flexi-access drawdown, you can usually take up to 25% of your pot tax-free (either all at once or in stages). You can then leave the rest invested and draw a taxable income from it later, as needed. The potential advantages include:

- Flexibility to vary your withdrawals over time, which can help manage tax and adapt to changing circumstances.
- Ability to keep your money invested, with the potential for growth through retirement.
- Option to pass remaining funds to beneficiaries.

However, there are some risks to consider:

- Your pot can fall in value if investments perform poorly, especially if you withdraw heavily during market downturns.
- Withdrawals are taxable after your tax-free lump sum is used up, and can push you into a higher tax band if not carefully planned.
- There is no guaranteed income. You are responsible for managing longevity risk (the risk that your money will run out too soon).

A well-run drawdown strategy usually involves a considered investment approach, realistic withdrawal rates and regular reviews with a financial planner.

Balancing security, flexibility and legacy

A key part of retirement planning is deciding how to blend security (guaranteed or highly reliable income sources), flexibility (e.g. drawdown and lump sums as your needs or circumstances change) and legacy (how much you want to preserve for loved ones or causes, and how pensions fit into your estate plans).

No two clients are the same. Some value certainty above all and lean more towards guaranteed income. Others are comfortable with some investment risk to keep their options open. A financial planner can model different

scenarios to show how choices today might play out over time.

The role of professional advice

Unlocking pension pot benefits is not just a one-off decision at "retirement day". It is an ongoing process of reviewing your income needs, tax position, investment performance and health, and adjusting course as life evolves.

A qualified financial planner can help you:

- Map out your retirement goals and likely spending patterns.
- Select and combine options (drawdown, annuity, lump sums, and deferral) to support sustainable income.
- Manage tax, avoid common pitfalls and ensure your pensions align with other parts of your financial plan, including wills and estate planning.

We hope this overview of pension options in 2025-26 has helped to clarify your options for securing the future retirement lifestyle you want.

Please don't hesitate to contact a member of the team to find out more about financial wellbeing.



Please note:

The information in this article is for general guidance only and does not constitute personal financial advice. Pension rules, tax treatment and allowances — such as the minimum pension age, tax-free lump sums, and annual contribution limits — depend on individual circumstances and may change in future. The value of pension investments can go down as well as up, and you may not get back the amount originally invested. Taking benefits flexibly from a defined contribution pension can reduce the sustainability of your retirement income and may trigger the Money Purchase Annual Allowance (MPAA), restricting future pension contributions. Past performance is not a reliable indicator of future results. Before making any retirement decisions, we recommend speaking to a regulated financial adviser or contacting services like Pension Wise for free guidance.

Building a Safety Net: How to Choose the Right Protection Insurance for Your Family



You work hard to support the people you love, but life has a habit of throwing up unexpected events that can derail your hopes and plans.

Protection insurance is about putting a safety net in place. If the worst happens, your family's finances are cushioned, and their plans can stay on track.

Yet with so many types of cover and jargon to navigate, it can be challenging to know where to start. Below, we look at the key forms of protection insurance in the UK, what they do and how to think clearly about which combination might be right for your family.

This is not about scaring you into buying cover you do not need. Instead, we are here to help you make calm, informed decisions that fit your life, values and budget.

Why Protection Matters

Most households depend on one or two incomes to pay for everyday life - mortgage or rent, food, childcare, transport and everything in between.

If a serious illness, disability or death suddenly removes that income, the financial impact can be devastating. Protection insurance exists to soften that blow, providing money when you or your family may need it most.

In practice, protection policies in the UK pay out billions of pounds every year to households whose lives have been disrupted by unforeseen events.

Recent figures suggest that life insurance, income protection and critical illness providers together pay out several billion in claims annually, with very high acceptance rates where policies are set up correctly.

This underlines that these products are not theoretical. They are used day in, day out, to keep families afloat when things go wrong.

The main types of cover

There are three core forms of protection most UK families might consider:

- Life insurance
- Critical illness cover
- Income protection.



Building a Safety Net (continued)

➔ Each plays a different role in your safety net, and they can often be combined.

Life insurance pays out a lump sum, usually if you die during the policy term. Critical illness cover pays a lump sum if you are diagnosed with a specified serious illness (e.g. certain cancers, heart attack or stroke) - as defined in the policy.

Income protection pays a regular monthly benefit if you cannot work due to illness or injury, helping to replace part of your lost earnings.

Here is a summary of how these policies work side by side:

Type of cover	What it pays for your family	When it pays out	Typical use in a family plan
Life insurance	One-off lump sum	On death during the policy term	Clear or reduce a mortgage, provide a nest egg or income fund for dependants
Critical illness	One-off lump sum	On diagnosis of a listed serious illness	Pay off or reduce major debts, fund home adaptations, or provide a recovery cushion
Income protection	Monthly income replacement	If you cannot work due to illness or injury, after a waiting period	Cover essential bills so the household can keep running while you recover

Here are the key takeaways:

- Life insurance is mainly about protecting those you leave behind
- Critical illness and income protection are about protecting you and your family whilst you are still alive, but unable to earn as you usually would.

Where to Start

It can be tempting to begin by looking at financial products. However, a better first step is to picture what would happen to your household finances under different "what if?" scenarios:

- What if you died next year?
- What if you were unable to work for a year due to illness?
- What if you were diagnosed with a major condition and needed time off to recover?

For each imagined future, consider the following:

- Which bills would still need to be paid (mortgage, rent, council tax, utilities, food, childcare, debt repayments)?
- What income would still be coming in (your partner's pay, employer sick pay, state benefits, savings)?
- How big is the gap between the two, and how long might the pressure last?

Please note:

Protection insurance policies have no cash-in value at any time and cover will lapse if premiums are not maintained. Terms and conditions apply, and exclusions may limit the scope of cover. The availability and level of benefit will depend on the type of policy selected and your individual circumstances. Not all illnesses or conditions may be covered, and pre-existing conditions may be excluded. Income protection benefits are typically subject to a deferral period and may be limited by a maximum benefit cap. Always review the full policy documents and consider seeking independent financial advice to ensure the cover meets your needs.

Whilst this exercise can be discomforting, it sharpens your mind and quickly clarifies where your most significant risks lie and where insurance might add the most value.

Life insurance

If you have a partner, children or others who rely on your income, life insurance is often the foundation of a family protection plan.

A payout can help clear a mortgage, repay debts or provide a pot of money that can be gradually drawn on to support ongoing living costs.

Think about how long your policy might need to last. Many people align the term with their mortgage, or until children are expected to be financially independent.

Critical illness cover

A serious illness can turn life upside down, even if you eventually make a good recovery. Treatment, time off work, and possible lifestyle changes can all add financial strain.

Critical illness cover aims to provide a lump sum at this difficult time if you are diagnosed with a condition listed in your policy, such as certain cancers, heart attack or stroke.

This insurance type can be useful for reducing/clearing a mortgage or other significant debts, so monthly outgoings fall. You might also use it to fund home modifications, private treatment or a recovery fund to relieve pressure while you focus on your health.

Income protection

For many households, the biggest financial risk is a long period of being unable to work because of illness or injury, rather than death.

Income protection is designed for precisely this scenario. It pays a regular, taxable monthly benefit that replaces a proportion of your earnings if you are signed off work, typically after an agreed waiting period.

Unlike critical illness cover, which focuses on specified conditions, income protection can cover a wide range of medical issues that stop you from doing your job.

These might include musculoskeletal problems like back pain, through to mental health conditions and chronic illnesses.

This flexibility makes it a powerful way to support everyday bills over the medium to long term, such as mortgage or rent, utilities, food, and so on.

We hope this overview of financial protection has helped to clarify your options for safeguarding you and your family.

Please don't hesitate to contact a member of the team to find out more about financial wellbeing.

THE VALUE OF FINANCIAL WELLBEING: STRATEGIES FOR A HEALTHIER FINANCIAL FUTURE



Financial wellbeing goes beyond just your assets and income on paper. It is about feeling secure, confident and in control of your finances so you can live the life you want, now and in the future. ➔

→ Many people in the UK face financial uncertainties, regardless of social class. This might be due to debt, unexpected expenses or challenges planning for retirement.

The good news? By adopting sound strategies, you can improve your financial wellbeing, protect yourself against shocks and build a healthier financial future.

A Deeper Look at Financial Wellbeing

Do you manage your money, or does your money manage you?

This might feel uncomfortable, but much of life's happiness depends on your answer to this question. If you constantly feel like you are chasing "more" or asking "what if?" questions, you get restless, insecure, and exhausted.

By contrast, if you are content with "enough" and feel like your finances could withstand most of life's "shocks", there's a great sense of peace.

Ultimately, financial wellbeing comes down to this:

- Managing your money effectively to meet your needs and goals
- Feeling financially secure
- Having the resilience to deal with financial challenges.

It involves having a clear understanding of your income and spending, saving regularly, managing debts responsibly and planning for the future.

Building wealth can certainly help with increasing your financial wellbeing, but going after wealth for its own sake typically ends up being self-defeating.

Instead, this is about achieving balance and peace of mind. People with strong financial wellbeing experience less stress and anxiety related to money, which can positively impact their overall health and quality of life.

Why It Matters

Money worries can be a heavy burden to bear. About 33% of British people worry about it every day, with 12% losing sleep regularly as a result.

So, clearly, a lack of financial wellbeing can affect your mental and physical health. It can also undermine your relationships and productivity at work.

For those living paycheck to paycheck or facing financial hardship during unexpected events (such as illness or job loss), the situation can feel even worse.

The answer is to improve your financial wellbeing. This can massively reduce your stress by giving you control over your finances and helping you prepare for unforeseen circumstances.

It can also empower you to make informed choices about spending, saving and investing - vital actions that underpin a secure financial future.

How to Improve Your Financial Wellbeing

Sounds simple in theory, but what are some practical ways to improve your inner world?

Set Clear Financial Goals

Many people feel financially disempowered because they feel aimless in their finances. Their money comes in and out each month, but there is little purpose to it - or awareness about where it goes.

Having a clear plan is the cornerstone of financial wellbeing. Define what you want to achieve both in the short term (such as reducing debt, saving for a holiday) and in the long term (like buying a home, funding retirement).

Setting realistic, measurable goals provides direction and motivation, making it easier to prioritise spending and saving.

Budget Wisely

Another significant step is to define a well-structured budget. This helps you understand your income and control your expenses.

Track where your money goes each month and identify opportunities to cut back on non-essential spending.

Using budgeting apps or simple spreadsheets can help keep this process organised.

Build an Emergency Fund

Life can be unpredictable, so having a financial safety cushion is vital. Aim to set aside enough money to cover three to six months of essential living expenses.

This fund acts as a buffer against unexpected costs such as medical bills or sudden job loss, preventing you from falling into debt during tough times.

Manage Debt Responsibly

Debt can quickly become overwhelming if not managed carefully. Make regular payments and avoid accumulating high-interest debt where possible.

Consider consolidating debts or seeking professional advice if you struggle to keep up with repayments.

Invest for the Future

Saving alone may not keep pace with rising living costs or help achieve longer-term financial goals. Investing wisely - whether through pensions, ISAs or stocks and shares - can help grow your wealth over time.

Start early to benefit from compounding returns, and review your investments regularly to ensure they align with your risk tolerance and objectives.

Protect Yourself and Your Family

Financial wellbeing also means planning for the unexpected. Consider appropriate insurance such as life cover, income protection or critical illness cover.

These safeguards can provide financial support in case of illness, injury, or death. Additionally, having a will and powers of attorney in place ensures your wishes are respected and your loved ones are protected.

Seek Professional Advice

Financial planning can seem complex, so don't hesitate to seek advice from qualified financial planners.

They can help tailor a strategy suited to your individual circumstances, maximising your financial wellbeing and helping you navigate changes in the market or your personal situation.

Taking Steps Today for Tomorrow's Financial Health

Building and maintaining financial wellbeing is an ongoing process.

Regularly review your goals, adjust your budget and stay informed about financial products and changes in regulations that might affect you.

Small, consistent actions can lead to significant improvements over time.

Remember, achieving financial wellbeing is not about perfection; it's about creating a healthier relationship with money that supports your life goals and reduces stress.

By prioritising your financial health today, you set the foundation for a more secure and confident future.

If you would like to learn more about managing your finances and securing your financial wellbeing, consider speaking to a financial adviser who can provide practical guidance tailored to your needs.

Please don't hesitate to contact a member of the team to find out more about financial wellbeing.

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This article is for information purposes only and does not constitute personal financial advice. The value of investments can go down as well as up, and you may not get back the full amount you invest. Past performance is not a reliable indicator of future results. Tax treatment depends on individual circumstances and may change. Financial plans may be affected by market fluctuations, inflation, and changes to legislation. Will writing and estate planning are not regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. You should seek independent financial advice before making any financial decisions.



New Horizons:

Building Friendships and Community in Retirement



Entering retirement can feel like landing on an alien world. You've been used to decades of career routine (e.g. commuting, colleagues, earning a salary), and now things are different. Suddenly, a new sense of freedom arrives, which can be exciting and unsettling at the same time. However, this chapter also offers one of life's greatest opportunities - i.e., the chance to reforge your social connections, personal identity, and joy-bringing activities.

Retirement is more than just "stopping work". It's a chance for renewal, giving you new avenues to explore fresh interests, meet new people and deepen old

relationships. Indeed, for many people, this is the first occasion they experience time that truly belongs to them.

However, it would be unfair to characterise retirement as completely easy. One of the biggest challenges is social connection. Around 1 in 14 people aged 65 or older experience frequent loneliness. With the right strategies, however, you don't have to be part of that number.

Community doesn't have to vanish in retirement. It might just take a different form (e.g. local groups, hobbies, volunteering, or even digital communities).

The key is to be proactive about finding it. Let's explore some ideas now.

Rekindling old passions

Have you longed to return to something (e.g. a hobby) you once loved, but set aside? Perhaps you loved playing a musical instrument, painting or gardening. Retirement could be the perfect time to take it back up again. Many retired people take this as their opportunity to rejoin a local choir, take an art class or try a gardening club. This is also a fantastic way to meet like-minded people.

Shared interests naturally create deep bonds. As C.S. Lewis said: "Friendship is born at that moment when one person says to another, 'What! You too? I thought I was the only one.'"

If you can't find the group or activity you want, why not start your own and invite others? In the UK, community centres, libraries and local councils often host affordable or free group activities.

From languages to local history, it's all peer-led - meaning you learn together rather than being "taught." Many members say they joined for the activity but stayed for the friendships.

Learning Something New

Lifelong learning isn't just for young people. Retirement gives you the time and focus to explore new skills, such as photography, pottery, computers, or cooking.

You could even take a formal course through adult education centres, online platforms like FutureLearn, or local colleges offering programmes tailored for older learners. These not only stimulate the mind but also provide a natural way to meet new people.

You'll often find that learning together makes conversation easy. After all, everyone's in the same boat, trying something new. It's a reminder that curiosity has no age limit.

Remember, you don't have to connect just with your peers. Many retired people get immense fulfilment from friendships with younger people. After all, many activities have no age limit and even encourage intergenerational relationships (e.g. mentoring schemes, community gardens, and neighbourhood projects).

These relationships bring many mutual benefits. A younger person might gain great insight from your experience and perspective, whilst you can gain fresh energy and new perspectives. It's a powerful way to stay connected to the wider world, and to keep learning and laughing along the way.

Volunteering: Giving Back, Gaining Purpose

Looking for a new sense of purpose after a long, successful career? Retirement is often the ideal time to ramp up one's generosity—especially in giving time to others.

One great byproduct of helping at a food bank, supporting a charity shop, or mentoring younger people

is the chance to meet people from all walks of life. Regular volunteering has also been linked to lower stress and higher life satisfaction.

Organisations such as Age UK, the National Trust, and local hospices are always looking for volunteers. Even just a few hours a week can make a difference, both to others and to you.

The Power of Staying Active

Physical activity is another great connector. Walking groups, swimming sessions or dance classes not only improve health but also create space for conversation and companionship.

Many towns have "walk and talk" or Park Run groups where people of all abilities meet to exercise and chat. The social side is often as important as the fitness.

If mobility is an issue, gentle classes like yoga or tai chi can still offer community benefits. The aim isn't to be "the best" at the activity - going the furthest or fastest. It's more about showing up and being part of something bigger.

Mindset Matters Most

Ultimately, the most significant shift in retirement is mental. The people who thrive are those who stay curious, generous, and open to new experiences.

It's not about filling every hour, but about creating meaning in the hours you have. Friendships flourish when you show up — with warmth, patience, and a willingness to connect.

And remember, community doesn't always mean crowds. It can be as simple as two or three close friends who share your values and bring out your best self.

A New Chapter, Not the End

Retirement isn't the closing of a book — it's a new chapter. One where you have the freedom to write your days with intention, surrounded by people who enrich your life.

Yes, it takes effort to build friendships and community, especially after decades of work routines. But that effort pays off many times over — in laughter, purpose, and belonging.

In the words of one retiree: "I thought I'd miss my job. What I really missed was people. Once I started putting myself out there again, I realised — the best part of life isn't behind me. It's right now."

Please note:

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Acuity Professional Advisers Ltd

Unit 2.02, High Weald House, Glovers End, Bexhill, East Sussex, TN39 5ES
Website: www.acuityprofessionaladvisers.com

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