Introducing Real Life Advice

A St. James's Place insight report

Chapters 1 – 6

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Understanding the research

What do we mean by financial advice and financial guidance?

We have looked at the impact of all forms of financial advice and guidance. From professional advice received through a financial advice firm or individual (including a wealth manager), an independent financial adviser (IFA), a qualified financial planner, and advice received through a bank or building society. We have also looked more broadly at understanding the impact of the help people receive through organisations such as Citizens Advice, Pension Wise, and others.

Research methodology

Wherever 'research' is mentioned throughout this chapter, please note that this refers to the research carried out by Opinium on behalf of St. James's Place.

Opinium surveyed just under 12,000 UK adults nationwide in two polls between May and August 2024. Quotas[1] and post-weighting[2] were applied to the sample to make the dataset representative of the UK adult population.

Quantitative data[3] referenced in this report is sourced from the first poll, which had a total sample of 7,995 respondents.

Within this poll, the relevant sub-samples were:

- Those in receipt of some form of advice or guidance, n=4,076
- Those not in receipt of some form of advice or guidance, n=3,719
- Those in receipt of financial advice from a qualified firm or individual, n=1,166
- Those aged 18-34, n=1,940
- Those aged 35-54, n=2,654
- Those aged 55 and over, n=3,401
- Those with over £100,000, n=964
- Those with £50,000-£100,000, n=881
- Those with £20,000-£49,999, n=1,299
- Those with £19,999 and under, n=3,834

[1] Quota sampling is a method in which researchers create a sample based on individuals representing a population. Researchers choose these individuals according to specific traits or qualities.

[2] Weighting is the process of manipulating data through calculations in order to bring them in line with the population being studied.

[3] Quantitative data are data represented by numbers, including anything that can be counted, measured, or given a numerical value.

Mark FitzPatrick
CEO, St. James's Place

Sound financial advice transforms lives. It's what inspired me to join St. James's Place in 2023, and I've seen it play out in so many people's stories since then. Stories where it's helped people to own a home, to support their children through education, to kick-start new business ventures - or overcome life's hurdles, from bereavement to divorce. Personal stories like these will ring true for advisers across the country.

Take Phil, who was sceptical about taking financial advice. He was worried that it wasn't for people like him. He suspected advisers were driven by "their own mission" rather than his needs and aspirations. But in reality he found that advice helped him to make his money work much harder and to make it easier for him to achieve his goals. Now he recommends advice to anyone, whatever their financial circumstances.

Phil's story really struck me. It starts with an all-too familiar challenge: the perception that advice is "not for me". But it's a story that ends with positive change. In Phil's case, with a new-found confidence and the sense of optimism about the future that comes with feeling in financial control. It is through stories like Phil's, and the thousands of others like it, that I've come to appreciate the indisputable, but often unseen barriers to accessing financial advice in the UK – but also the benefits when we break through them.

Today's economic environment means that these barriers matter more than ever. We live longer, house prices continue to rise, Defined Benefit (DB) pensions have all but disappeared, and the savings and wealth gap is growing between the generations. The future we want risks slipping further from our reach.

But this doesn't have to be the case. Advice and guidance – whether regulated financial advice or broader financial guidance from organisations such as Citizens Advice – can help people in all walks of life to establish a sense of financial control. In turbulent times like these, we need more of both.

Until we come together to break down the invisible barriers – the concerns that stop more people seeking the advice or guidance they need – millions will stop short of aspirations that are well within their reach.

Phil`s story

"I didn't think financial advice was suitable for someone like me, and I didn't think an adviser would want or even be able to help me. I thought an adviser would bamboozle me with numbers and, to be honest, I was sceptical that they'd be on their own mission, rather than looking out for me.

But now I'd advise anybody – regardless of their financial situation – to get guidance on what they can do with their money.

Since I finally took the plunge 12 years ago, my adviser, Hansa, has always been at the end of the phone to guide me. She talks to me about my goals and what I want to do in life – and what I could do with my money to help me achieve these aims. She's also been there to reassure me when I've had a couple of moments of panic, such as when markets have crashed.

Hansa's advice has been invaluable to me. I'm better off than I would have been without her help – but most importantly, I finally feel like I'm in financial control."

Change starts with addressing misplaced perceptions. Too often people assume that seeking advice or guidance is only for two extremes: for the very wealthy, or for those in financial strife. So many more people's lives and futures could be improved simply by getting access to the support they need.

Our Real Life Advice Report, carried out on behalf of SJP by Opinium and including just under 12,000 individuals, will explore the benefits of accessing financial advice or guidance. Addressing the barriers standing in the way is one step in this process.

84% of those who receive ongoing financial advice from a qualified firm or individual say that it has significantly benefited their mental and emotional wellbeing.

Through real life stories, and new insight, we'll uncover the pivotal role these services play in improving the nation's financial wellbeing. The people, for instance, who say that ongoing financial advice has significantly benefited their mental and emotional wellbeing. Who are more confident, less stressed, and less vulnerable, among other positive outcomes.

We'll consider how access to financial advice or guidance can enhance people's quality of life. How it can mean a more comfortable retirement, a healthier savings pot – or the power to better manage the unexpected when it happens.

Moreover, whilst almost half of the nation receives no form of financial advice or guidance, this Real Life Advice Report will demonstrate the critical role that these services can play in supporting the financial health of millions of people and helping them to reach their goals.

In the coming weeks and months, I hope the report will play a part in turning the tide on misplaced perceptions.

But addressing attitudes is just the starting point. If we're to help address the challenges we face, we're going to need more advice and guidance, which means a focus on two further areas:

First, we must close the gap between guidance and full holistic advice. In December 2022 the Government and the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) commenced the Advice Guidance Boundary Review to examine the regulatory boundary between financial advice and other forms of support. This is a critical opportunity for change and it's vital we maintain momentum on this issue to improve the help available to people.

Second, we must train more advisers. The number of financial advisers has remained fairly consistent for the last decade, at approximately 28,000 both in 2010 and in 2024, according to FCA data. If we want to encourage more people to seek advice, we need more talent - from all age groups and walks of life – to take the leap into a career in the industry. We are committed to playing our part in that change.

The St. James's Place Financial Adviser Academy introduces hundreds of new professionals into advice every year, ready to make a difference to people's lives.

We have lots more to do to break down the barriers that are stopping more people like Phil from getting the advice or guidance they deserve. But when we succeed, then individuals, families, and our society as a whole will all reap the benefits. So, let's get to it.

Mark FitzPatrick
CEO, St. James's Place

Hansa Hirani

Financial Adviser

"It's a lifelong relationship. When you're supporting someone through the ups and downs of their lives, and often over many decades, the relationship you develop with them is truly unique.

You don't want to tell someone what to do with their money. You don't want someone to lose a minute's sleep about a decision they've made. So, you work on giving them the financial knowledge they need to understand their options and feel confident in what they decide to do.

In short, you get to a point where you can make decisions together. It's why the relationship is so much more than a transaction."

Chapter 1

Why advice matters

St. James's Place's Real Life Advice Report carried out by Opinium surveyed just under 12,000 individuals between May and August 2024 to understand how financial advice and guidance of all forms – whether regulated advice or broader guidance – impacts families and communities across the UK. The results underscore the importance of advice and guidance in boosting mental wellbeing, quality of life, and our ability to achieve goals and handle life's hurdles, regardless of our circumstances.

They highlight the perceived barriers to advice that mean many millions of people may be missing out on goals within their reach – and stress the importance of breaking down these barriers to support our financial health as individuals and as a nation.

When taken, financial advice or financial guidance creates positive impact across all walks of life no matter where people live, their gender or age.

Indeed, of those surveyed 84% of those accessing financial advice or guidance say they have benefitted mentally or emotionally, rising to 92% of those in receipt of ongoing financial advice from a qualified firm or individual.

And the practical benefits are just as compelling. 90% of those accessing financial advice or guidance have seen their quality of life improve in some way, rising to an overwhelming 96% of those in receipt of ongoing financial advice from a qualified firm or individual.

Advice can have a big impact even when people have more modest savings pots. When asked how advice or guidance has benefitted them mentally and emotionally, people with less than £20,000 in financial assets report having a better understanding of their finances (30%) and feeling less vulnerable (24%). Meanwhile for those with higher levels of savings and assets (over £100,000) the principal benefit is feeling more confident around their financial future (38%).

75% would recommend financial advice to others, rising to 86% amongst those receiving ongoing advice from a qualified firm or individual.

Advice, when taken, boosts confidence and improves quality of life across regions, gender and income levels.

Boosts mental wellbeing:

84% say they have benefitted mentally or emotionally. This increases to 92% of those who receive ongoing financial advice from a qualified firm or individual.

Enhances quality of life:

65% say it has improved their quality of life in some way, rising to 75% for those who receive ongoing advice from a qualified firm or individual.

Enables life's goals:

47% say it has enabled them to reach a specific life goal or tackle one of life's hurdles. This increases to 58% for those receiving ongoing financial advice from a qualified firm or individual.

The benefits in full: confidence, resilience and quality of life

Our research highlights that there are three clear pillars of how financial advice and guidance benefit individuals across the country:

Boosts mental wellbeing:

84% of those accessing financial advice or guidance in some form have benefitted mentally or emotionally'. This increases to **92%** of those who receive ongoing financial advice of whom:

- **33%** are more confident
- **26%** are less stressed
- **26%** worry less
- **25%** feel less vulnerable
- **23%** are more confident in the financial future for their loved ones
- **20%** sleep better at night
- **17%** have a better relationship with family.

Improves quality of life:

65% say that taking financial advice has improved their quality of life in some way – rising to **75%** for those who receive ongoing financial advice. The top reasons given are that:

- **32%** have a more comfortable retirement
- **24%** are able to afford larger purchases (holidays, home repairs, weddings etc)
- **25%** are able to save more
- **18%** know the unexpected can be covered
- **16%** gives them job flexibility
- **12%** can better manage the cost of raising children.

Enables life's goals:

47% say taking financial advice has enabled them to reach a specific life goal or tackle one of life's hurdles. This increases to **58%** for those receiving ongoing financial advice, including:

- **28%** owning own home, upsizing and paying off mortgage
- **19%** an inheritance for children
- **12%** saving for children's education
- **10%** starting own business
- **13%** divorce, bereavement, redundancy
- **11%** supporting elderly family
- **8%** starting/expanding family through IVF/Adoption.

Louise's story

"My husband Andy and I first took advice to map how our finances could support a comfortable lifestyle and key moments for our children. But within a year, a cancer diagnosis completely changed our focus, from wedding costs and house deposits to ensuring that the children and I would be financially looked after should the worst happen.

Andy was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin lymphoma just over a decade ago, and although it is considered one of the most treatable and curable cancers, our adviser was able to work with us to put us in the best position possible, whatever the outcome. She supported us to use our critical illness insurance, which meant I could give up work to look after Andy full-time and concentrate on the children, and she helped us use tax reliefs and allowances.

A couple of years later, when we received the devastating news that Andy's condition was terminal, she was a rock at an incredibly difficult and emotional time. Because she took care of the practical financial issues, it meant that as a family we had the space to spend more precious time together, without the stress of finances. Above all, she gave Andy peace of mind that we would be taken care of once he had gone.

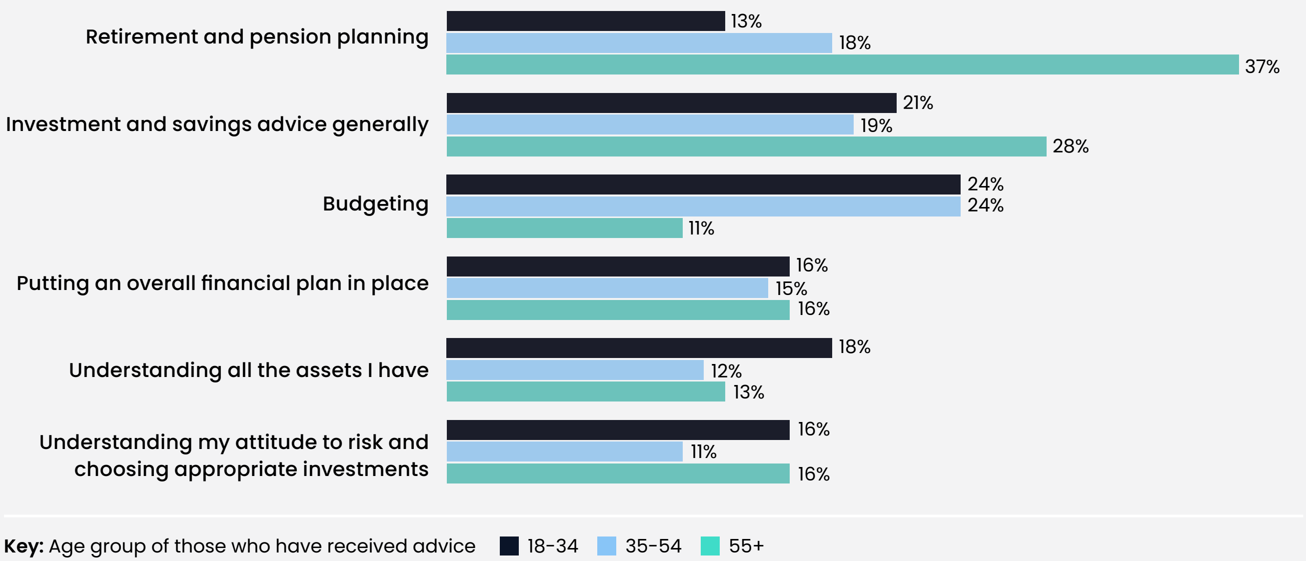
When that day came, the foundations had been put in place to make sure we were financially secure, which took away a huge amount of worry; this time giving us space to grieve. My adviser had everything covered and it made me feel safe. She was available whenever we needed, and still is to this day.

I wouldn't have got through the last decade without her – I wouldn't even have known where to start."

Retirement and pension planning is the area of advice and guidance people have found most beneficial.

The areas of financial advice and guidance which people have found most helpful are retirement and pension planning, and general investment and savings advice. However, this changes when the data is broken down by age and levels of wealth.

By generation:



And by wealth levels:

- Those with over £100,000: investment and savings advice is considered the most helpful, with better understanding of risk appetite and choosing appropriate investments also high up the list.
- Those with between £50,000-100,000: highly rank the help they've received to understand 'what they have in the first place', putting in place an overall financial plan and budgeting.
- Those with under £20,000: understandably, budgeting sits at the top followed closely by retirement planning. Over a quarter (27%) of those seeking guidance through organisations such as Citizens Advice say it has helped them tackle life's hurdles including divorce, bereavement, redundancy, and supporting elderly family members.

"I believe I have achieved much greater returns and been made aware of things I might not have known thanks to advice received."

"It helps me estimate where the market is going and what is the best action to take to improve my personal finance management."

"It helped me to apply for early retirement and have a better idea of what I was going to come out with."

Quotes from UK consumers

'Not for people like me'

The perceived barriers to financial advice

Our research shows how much of a difference advice and guidance can make to people's lives. But it also reveals that, despite the benefits, too few people seek it out.

To understand why, we asked those who do not take financial advice why not, and their answers pointed to three barriers.

24.6
million people

have never received financial guidance of any kind.

The relevance barrier

Too many people think that their circumstances don't warrant advice – a third (33%) say their personal situation is too simple and doesn't require it.

The perception barrier

Too many people are unaware of how advice might help them. Nearly 1 in 10 (8%, rising to 14% of 18-34s) have not considered financial advice because they are not aware of its potential benefits.

The timing barrier

1 in 7 (14%)of those aged 18-34 and 1 in 20 (6%) of those over 55 believe it's either too early or too late to take advice, meaning they miss out on taking action that could benefit their long – or short – term futures.

All told, these barriers are preventing up to 11m people in the UK from getting advice that could transform their financial circumstances.

"I don't feel like my financial situation requires [financial advice] – it feels too complex for my needs."

"I don't really understand how [financial advice] would benefit me."

"I feel really unconfident even discussing financial matters and my lack of understanding makes me feel anxious to take professional financial advice."

"As a pensioner I don't need financial advice."

Quotes from UK consumers

Our call to action

We want to help people overcome these barriers so that more people can benefit from financial advice, potentially transforming not just their lives but the financial health and resilience of the country as a whole.

That's why we're calling for:

1. **The gap between guidance and full holistic advice to be closed.**

Regulatory change through the Advice Guidance Boundary Review is a critical opportunity for change and it's vital we maintain momentum on this issue to improve the help available to people.

- **Targeted advice:** we believe the greatest opportunity sits within the targeted support proposal, but this is also where we find the greatest risk. There is a fine balancing act between encouraging more people to invest for the future without compromising on consumer protection. Targeted support should be about firms helping consumers to make their own decisions through clear and simple tips and information but, put simply, this should not feel like advice. As such, there should be restrictions on targeted support firms recommending the sale of products or the encashment of products, especially if the provider of the support benefits commercially. It was almost exactly this risk that saw some poor consumer outcomes until the professionalism of financial advisers was improved through the Retail Distribution Review (RDR) in 2013 and latterly by Consumer Duty.
- **Simplified advice:** we believe the simplified advice proposal will be most useful in helping consumers invest for the first time. The challenge is making it cheap enough to attract enough new consumers into the market whilst still making it a viable option for firms taking on the liability of standing behind the advice offered. We believe that building on the principles adopted for Abridged Advice, which uses a limited number of pre-determined outcomes and is working successfully in the advice market already, could help solve this issue.
- **Clarifying the boundary:** if, as we hope and expect, targeted support and simplified advice become available to UK consumers, it will be important to maintain a clear and easily understood distinction between the two so that consumers understand the service they have received. We fully support the proposal to clarify the boundary and believe examples should be chosen that are closer to the boundary to help firms move nearer.

2. **More advisers to be trained and enter the workforce.**

The number of financial advisers has remained fairly consistent for the last decade, at approximately 28,000 both in 2010 and in 2024, according to FCA data. There is a problem of supply due to an ageing population of advisers. If we want to encourage more people to seek advice, we need more talent – from all age groups and walks of life – to take the leap into our sector. We need financial advice to be recognised and promoted as a fulfilling career path for college and university leavers. We are committed to playing our part in that change. The St. James's Place Financial Adviser Academy introduces hundreds of new professionals into advice every year, ready to make a difference to people's lives.

3. **A campaign to change perceptions around advice.**

We want to shift misperceptions of advice in order to overcome the invisible barriers that are stopping more people benefitting from it. That started with our first-ever national brand advertising campaign which sets out to bring the broad benefits of advice to life. Our Real Life Advice Report builds on this, using fresh insight and our industry expertise to shine a light on the impact financial advice can have and the action we must take to ensure this impact is felt more widely.

The value of an investment with St. James's Place will be directly linked to the performance of the funds you select and the value can therefore go down as well as up. You may get back less than you invested.

Chapter 2

The advice journey

Our SJP expert`s thoughts on the advice journey

"Big life events and milestones make people stop, assess and plan, and often they prompt people to undertake some financial planning too. While it's clear that one of the greatest benefits of financial advice or guidance is the support it can offer in times of change or stress, the key to navigating those moments is putting a strong financial plan in place ahead of time. Seeking the support to do so not only boosts mental and emotional wellbeing, but provides the confidence to reach life's goals and milestones in the first place."

Alexandra Loydon
Director Partner Engagement and Consultancy at St. James's Place

As we continue our Real Life Advice Report, our second chapter explores the 'advice journey', starting with why people get professional support in the first place through to understanding the benefits that financial advice and guidance can have at different stages of life.

Whilst our research shows 24.6m people across the country have never received any form of professional financial advice or guidance, it also shows that, when taken, advice is transformational with people saying they have benefited from better mental and emotional wellbeing (84%) and improved quality of life (65%). It also enables them to reach life's milestones or navigate its unexpected challenges (47%) which are often what nudge people into taking advice in the first place.

There is no doubt that big life events and milestones make people stop, assess and plan, and often they prompt people to undertake some financial planning too. However, whilst it's clear that one of the greatest benefits of financial advice or guidance is the support it can offer in times of change or stress, the key to navigating those moments is putting a strong financial plan in place well ahead of time. Seeking the support to do so not only boosts mental and emotional wellbeing, but provides the confidence to reach life's goals and milestones in the first place.

What our research also shows is what prompts people to seek out advice is changing because managing money and planning for the future is more complex than it ever was. Higher living costs, a tougher housing market and longer-term trends such as greater individual responsibility for retirement are providing an increasingly testing and complex backdrop for the younger generation. In turn, this is driving them to seek financial advice and guidance in many more situations – from landmark moments like buying their first home to marriage to how they manage the cost of living – than their parents' generation ever did. As a nation, it is vital that we encourage more people to think and talk about money, how to budget, putting a financial plan in place and building wealth early if we are to secure a better future whatever our circumstances.

First, what prompts people to seek out advice?

12.5m

seek financial advice or guidance due to a major life event or milestone.

From buying a property or marriage to dealing with an unexpected change such as divorce, our research shows these moments are collectively the biggest trigger (**48%**) for seeking support.

In our survey we explored what prompted people to seek out professional financial advice or wider financial guidance. We found that this varied widely and specifically across generations, but that five consistent themes emerged, revealing the circumstances most likely to encourage people to look for support. We're calling these themes the **five advice drivers:**

1. Life's milestones

Every life is marked out by significant milestones. When such a moment comes along, it is often the trigger to start thinking about financial planning with the help of expert advice or guidance. Our survey found that getting older and reaching a certain age, buying a property, inheritance, retirement and marriage were the most common milestones prompting action.

- **17%** – Reached a certain age
- **15%** – Bought a property
- **12%** – Inheritance
- **10%** – Retirement
- **10%** – Marriage

2. Unexpected changes and challenge

As we began to explore in Chapter 1 of our Real Life Advice Report – Why Advice Matters – one of the greatest benefits of financial advice or guidance is the support it can offer in moments of change or stress. It follows, therefore, that unexpected changes – good or bad – to people's job status, such as promotion, career change or redundancy, together with facing life's challenges such as divorce, a serious illness, caring for loved ones, or becoming a single parent are triggers for seeking support.

- **12%** – Change in job status
- **6%** – Divorce
- **6%** – Caring for loved ones
- **5%** – Serious illness
- **5%** – Becoming a single parent

3. A changing economic and policy environment

Macro trends can have very individual consequences, and for some of those in receipt of advice or guidance a change in the policy or economic environment was the trigger for action. Indeed, in our research the single biggest recent driver for seeking financial advice or guidance was the cost-of-living crisis. Others, meanwhile, chose to seek advice or guidance due to a change in the economy, high mortgage rates, or changes in policy or the government.

- **18%** – Worries about the cost of living
- **13%** – A change in the economy
- **10%** – High mortgage rates
- **7%** – Policy changes
- **5%** – A change of government

4. Accumulating success

For just under a fifth (**18%**) of people who have taken advice or guidance – rising to **27%** of those in receipt of ongoing financial advice from a qualified firm or individual – seeking support was the happy consequence of accumulating a savings or investment pot large enough to warrant advice. Interestingly, this trend varied little by age, with **18%** of 18-34s taking advice or guidance for this reason compared with **20%** of those aged over 55.

My savings/investment reached a value I thought justified professional support:

- **18%** of all those who've taken advice or guidance
- **27%** of those in receipt of ongoing financial advice from a qualified firm or individual
- **18%** of 18-34s taking advice or guidance
- **20%** of those aged over 55 taking advice or guidance

5. Recommendations and referrals

Referrals and recommendations are also common prompts for taking advice or guidance. This is generally true for those in receipt of advice or guidance but particularly true for those in receipt of ongoing financial advice from a qualified firm or individual. Whether through a personal referral or – for some – having a family adviser, the opportunity to seek support often translates into action.

- Personal referral – **15%,** rising to **22%** of those in receipt of ongoing financial advice from a qualified firm or individual
- Having a family adviser – **8%**, rising to **12%** of those in receipt of ongoing financial advice from a qualified firm or individual

Eileen's story

"Separating from my partner led me to my financial adviser – he's helped me arrange my financial future".

When I separated from my partner in 2019, I found myself living on my own for the first time in my life. It was quite a culture shock. I'd been married for so long that I wanted to take stock of my own personal finances so I could feel confident at the start of this new chapter. The first step was finding a mortgage for my new home.

My friend recommended I meet Sean, a financial adviser she knew, and while I was nervous before our first meeting, I left it feeling empowered. In the months to come Sean helped me sort my mortgage, open an ISA, sort my pension – and essentially reset my finances for my new life. Little did I know at that point how much more change Sean would help me to navigate.

In 2022 my father suffered a fatal accident. I was with him at the time and absolutely devastated. I had to try to get dad's finances in order but as Sean and I started to look into them we discovered dad was about as far removed from having his finances organised as it's possible to get. Almost none of his paperwork – if we had it – was up to date. It was a mess.

The Will was very difficult to get hold of, and when we finally found it, we discovered dad had left his estate to his second wife, not to my daughters, as he had said. The deeper we dug, the more entangled things became. I discovered paperwork suggesting my grandmother hadn't left a Will when she died over twenty years before, so her estate also appeared to be incomplete. I needed to sort this first to be able to wind up my father's affairs. It was an enormous logistical task, at a very difficult time.

I've never felt so out of control in my life, as I did that first year after losing dad. I was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress-disorder and signed off work for six weeks for counselling. Sean could see that I was struggling, and said he would deal with all the paperwork. He completely took the weight off my shoulders. Even today, the estates and inheritances are still not finalised, but despite everything that's happened, the one thing I haven't been worried about is my financial future.

Sean is now helping my wider family, ensuring my mum's affairs are up to date, arranging a mortgage for my daughter, and even helping my ex-partner. He has helped me to reassert a sense of control at some of the most challenging times in my life. He's practically one of the family.

Your home may be repossessed if you do not keep up repayments on your mortgage.

The value of an investment with St. James's Place will be directly linked to the performance of the funds selected and may fall as well as rise. You may get back less than the amount invested.

Advice relating to a Will or probate matters will necessitate the referral to a service that is separate and distinct from those offered by St. James's Place and are not regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

Financial life ever more complex for millennials

What prompts people to take financial advice or guidance in the first place is changing. While those aged 55 and over say they were prompted to seek financial advice or guidance for more simple reasons – with one in 5 stating it was either because they'd reached retirement (21%), their savings had reached a certain level (20%), or they'd reached a certain age (20%) – the research reveals that millennials are more likely to seek support to navigate more complicated issues as managing money continues to become ever more complex as they approach significant life events for the first time.

- A quarter of those in the 18-34 age group (24%) say they have sought advice or guidance because they were worried about the cost of living compared to less than one in 10 (8%) aged 55 and over.
- One in 10 aged 18-34 are turning to advice or guidance to tackle how they support a loved one with care costs (12%) compared to only 1% of those aged 55 and over.
- And, as the average age of owning a home gets pushed firmly into our thirties, young adults are nearly twice as likely to have been prompted to seek support to solve how they get on the housing ladder as those over 55 (17% compared to 10%). More than five times as likely due to concerns around high mortgage rates (16% versus 3%).
- Even marriage is becoming a more complex financial decision for the younger generation. Whereas seeking some form of financial advice before getting married or starting a family was a rarity for those now aged over 55, 18-34 year olds are much more likely to do so. Three times as many are seeking some form of financial advice before getting married than their parents' generation aged over 55 (14% versus 5%) and more than 1 in 10 of 18- 34 years are reaching for support before starting a family (14% versus 1% for those now aged over 55).

How the role of advice changes across generations

When we look at the drivers of advice across the generations, we find that distinct patterns emerge in the role advice or guidance plays in supporting financial wellbeing.

The 18-34 Age Group: Laying the Foundations and Overcoming Hurdles

- The 18-34 age group is primarily concerned with immediate financial pressures, such as the **cost of living** (24%) and significant life events like **buying a property** (17%).
- At this stage, financial advice serves as a tool for **navigating financial stability** and **managing major purchases**. These individuals often seek advice when confronted with complex financial decisions they may not have encountered before, such as securing a mortgage or understanding investment basics.
- Advice at this stage is **reactive** and **event driven**. Individuals in this age group are often prompted to seek advice when they feel uncertain or overwhelmed by new financial responsibilities.
- They are also influenced by **personal recommendations**, with **18%** of this group being swayed to seek advice based on the experiences of others.

The 35-54 Age Group: Building and Protecting Wealth

- As individuals move into the 35-54 age bracket, their financial focus shifts towards **wealth accumulation** and **future planning**. This group is likely to seek advice as their **savings or investments reach significant levels** (15%) and as they start thinking about **long-term goals** such as retirement.
- They may also seek advice when reaching **mid-life milestones** or when reassessing their financial situation in light of major life changes (e.g., children's education, career advancements).
- At this stage, advice becomes more **strategic**. Individuals are less driven by immediate concerns and more by the need to **optimise their financial planning** for future security.
- There's a greater emphasis on **investment strategies, tax efficiency**, and **retirement planning**. People in this group might begin to consult with financial advisers regularly to ensure they are on track to meet their financial goals.

The 55+ Age Group: Securing Retirement and Legacy Planning

- For those aged 55 and over, the focus is heavily on **retirement security** and **estate planning**. The trigger for seeking advice often stems from reaching a point in life where ensuring a stable and comfortable retirement becomes paramount.
- This group is likely to seek advice on **managing retirement funds, pension plans**, and **estate management** to ensure that their financial affairs are in order as they approach or enter retirement.
- Advice at this stage is **proactive** and centred around **preservation and distribution of wealth**. Individuals in this age group are more concerned with protecting their assets, ensuring their wealth lasts throughout retirement, and planning for the transfer of wealth to the next generation.
- The focus of consultations with financial advisers are centred on how individuals navigate the complexities of retirement income, healthcare costs, and estate planning.

Chapter 3

The advice relationship

Our SJP expert`s thoughts on the advice relationship

Andy Payne
Head of the St. James's Place
Financial Adviser Academy

The first two chapters of our Real Life Advice Report brought to life the positive impact financial advice and guidance – whether regulated financial advice from a qualified professional or wider guidance from an organisation like Citizens Advice – can have on everyday lives.

Be it support through life's milestones, helping navigate unexpected change and challenges, weathering economic storms or making the most of hard-earned success, we know that advice and guidance can have profound benefits both practically and emotionally.

We also know that, for those in receipt of regulated financial advice, those benefits are magnified. The more advice someone receives from a regulated expert, the more likely it is to be life enhancing or even life changing. Our third chapter explores one of the essential drivers of this impact: The Advice Relationship.

At SJP, we know the importance and power of that relationship. Over lifetimes and across families. Our Partners support nearly a million people to achieve their goals, navigating different life stages and any bumps in the road along the way. As part of that relationship, we often work with multiple generations to pass on legacies and plan for the future. With 55% of our new business coming from personal introductions in the last 12 months alone[1], the strength of our client relationships has always been at the heart of our growth and success.

We see the same picture in the advice relationships across the UK.

In the last 12 months[1]

55%

of our new business has come from personal introductions

[1] Based on data covering 20/10/23 to 19/10/24.

In our survey of 12,000 individuals, we identified those in receipt of regulated financial advice and asked them:

First whether they'd ever switched adviser
Second how long they'd had their current adviser relationship
Third how many would recommend getting financial advice

Relationships built to last

More than three fifths (62%) of those in receipt of regulated financial advice have never switched their financial adviser. This rises to nearly three quarters of those aged 35-54 (72%) and those aged 55 and over (74%), indicating just how many longstanding advice relationships exist. And this is reflected in the average length of adviser-client relationships. The typical relationship across all age groups with a financial adviser or advice firm lasts around seven years, but this rises to over a decade for those aged 55 and over – with nearly a third (31%) of this generation having been with their adviser for 16 years or more.

62%

of those in receipt of regulated financial advice **across all age groups** have never switched their financial adviser.

74%

of those in receipt of regulated financial advice **aged 55 and over** have never switched their financial adviser.

7 years

is the length of time a typical relationship **across all age groups** lasts between a client and their financial adviser or advice firm.

16 years

is the length of time a typical relationship for those **aged 55 and over** lasts between a client and their financial adviser or advice firm.

Relationships built on strong foundations

In chapter one, we highlighted that 84% of those taking ongoing financial advice say they have benefited mentally and emotionally, with 75% saying it has improved their quality of life. However, the long-term advice relationships across the UK prompted us to explore what underpins those connections further. We asked those who've never switched why, when there are so many different options out there. The main reason was **trust in the relationship** – chosen by 2 in 5 (39%) of all those who've never switched adviser, rising to 50% of those aged 55 and over. This was closely followed by being **happy with the advice and financial returns their current adviser had delivered** (35%) and their adviser's **understanding of their financial situation** (34%).

UK adults provide the following reasons for staying with their adviser

I trust my current adviser	39%
I am happy with the advice and financial returns my current adviser has delivered for me	35%
My current adviser understands my financial situation	34%
I have a good relationship with my current adviser that has been built up over a number of years	33%
My current adviser understands my long-term goals and is helping to deliver them	29%
My current adviser looks after me and my family	21%
My current adviser has helped me through big life stages/moments	18%
I want to ensure my adviser knows my financial situation well in case something happens to me	17%

Past performance is not indicative of future performance.

The value of an investment with St. James's Place will be directly linked to the performance of the funds you select, and the value can therefore go down as well as up. You may get back less than you invested.

Relationships built on being there when it matters

When looking specifically at those who receive ongoing financial advice through a financial advice firm or individual, a key benefit is how it helps people put the foundations in place for a stronger financial future, from saving more money for retirement (32%) to ensuring there is adequate protection if they need it (22%).

However, the reported benefits of that advice also often touch on major life goals and personal moments or milestones, which vary depending upon the circumstances of the individual, demonstrating the importance of personalised advice.

For many, it plays a key role in getting on the property ladder (13%), enabling them to navigate the complexities of homeownership. It proves invaluable in helping individuals manage difficult periods, such as divorce, bereavement, or redundancy, with 13% benefiting from expert guidance during these challenging times. The research also illustrates how this ongoing advice supports families across generations, enabling families to pass on money to their children or loved ones (19%), to better manage the cost of raising children (12%), or to provide more financial support to elderly family members (11%).

Additionally, financial advice empowers individuals to improve their quality of life. Benefits range from giving people more flexibility in their job (16%) to affording larger purchases (13%) – whether it's a car, wedding, or home repairs – and helps some realise their dream of upsizing to a new home (9%). Moreover, 10% have used ongoing financial advice to start their own business, while 8% found support in starting or expanding their families, including through IVF and adoption.

The reported benefits of advice

Helped me save more money for retirement	32%
Ensured there is adequate protection in place	22%
Enabled me to pass on money to my children or loved ones	19%
Gave me more flexibility in my job	16%
Helped me get on the property ladder	13%
Helped me better navigate difficult periods (e.g. divorce, separation, bereavement, redundancy)	13%
Allowed me to afford larger purchases (e.g. car, wedding, home repairs etc.)	13%
Meant I could better manage the cost of children	12%
Meant I was able to start my own business	10%
Enabled me to upsize/buy dream home	9%
Supported me in starting/expanding my family (including IVF, adoption)	8%

These goals, moments and milestones may be common to many lives, but the specific circumstances will always be unique. Our research shows that support from an expert financial adviser, with not just the technical expertise but the empathy to deploy it sensitively and with their clients' needs in mind, can be the difference between a hope dashed and a dream realised.

Past performance is not indicative of future performance.

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Relationships to recommend

Given the clear benefits that ongoing advice brings to those receiving it across the nation, it is perhaps unsurprising that 86% of those currently receiving advice from a professional financial adviser would recommend getting advice to family and friends.

It is clear from our research that choosing a financial adviser is about more than selecting someone to manage your money. It's about finding a trusted partner who will be there for you and your family through life's changes, helping you navigate the financial complexities of each stage with confidence and care.

From a first job to retirement and beyond, our insight illustrates how financial advisers help clients establish a solid financial foundation early on, advising on savings strategies, investment options, and protection needs. As clients progress through life, the focus shifts to more complex planning around property purchases, education funding, and career transitions. In retirement, advisers provide guidance on income strategies, estate planning, and tax efficiency, ensuring clients can enjoy their retirement years without financial stress and acting as stewards of the family's financial legacy. A strong adviser-client relationship often extends far beyond a single individual. It's common for financial advisers to become integral to family decision-making, providing continuity and guidance through different life stages for multiple generations.

However, as we've highlighted through our recent chapters, one of the biggest benefits is also around peace of mind and confidence. It's about being there for the good times but navigating more difficult times such as the loss of a loved one or a significant life change. By investing in these relationships, both financial advisers and clients benefit from a partnership that not only meets financial objectives but also fosters a sense of security, trust, and shared purpose.

86% **of those currently receiving advice from a professional financial adviser would recommend getting advice to family and friends.**

Past performance is not indicative of future performance.

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Evan and Liz`s story

Evan's story: ***"My adviser Liz was 21 when we first met – and I'm still with her 32 years later".***

I had already retired from my job in an NHS accounts department when I was introduced to Liz. She wasn't the first financial adviser I'd used – but she was definitely the youngest. I've always been very appreciative of the work all three of my financial advisers have done for me, but Liz has become like family and I trust her completely.

We've been through a great deal together, from day-to-day advice on investing and ISAs, to the aftermath of coping with my beloved wife's death in 2018. When Dorothy first went into care, the local authority attempted to means test our family by using my ISA as well as Dorothy's own savings, which could have significantly impacted the cost of her social care. Liz called Age Concern to verify that they couldn't do this, and this has meant I've still got my ISA which will pass to my son Phil, when the time comes. When Dorothy did pass away, Liz was the second person I told. We shared a hug – and a tear.

Thirty-two years later, Liz is still advising me and Phil with all aspects of our finances. We go out to lunch together regularly, and Liz always celebrates my birthdays with me. We've always had a lovely, friendly relationship, and have a laugh and a joke at the same time. Liz comes to our home as a friend, as well as a financial adviser. To us, she's family.

The value of an investment with St. James's Place will be directly linked to the performance of the funds selected and may fall as well as rise. You may get back less than the amount invested.

"We`ve been through a great deal together, from day-to-day advice on investing and ISAs, to the aftermath of coping with my beloved wife`s death in 2018."

Liz's story: *At 96, Evan is my oldest client. He was also my very first when I started my career aged 21 back in 1992. We struck up a bond and I always stayed at his home longer than I meant to. We'd just chat and chat, and his wife Dorothy would sometimes fall asleep! When I joined SJP in 2015 and set up my own Partner practice a few years later, Evan came with me.*

He understands investments and markets and took a keen interest in managing his money well right from day one. In fact, he taught me a thing or two. He'd ask me quite tricky questions and I learnt to have the confidence to say, 'I don't know the answer to that, but I'll find out.' He taught me the importance of honestly saying 'I don't know' from an early age. That was a great lesson.

Evan has played an enormous part in my career as well as my life. As a lifelong financial adviser, you're there for the ups, the downs, the everything in between. You hold a place in their heart and they in yours. Advice is about more than money – it's making sure that money does the best for someone you care about.

The value of an investment with St. James's Place will be directly linked to the performance of the funds selected and may fall as well as rise. You may get back less than the amount invested.

"Evan has played an enormous part in my career as well as my life. As a lifelong financial adviser, you're there for the ups, the downs, the everything in between."

Chapter 4

Advice and vulnerability

Our SJP expert's thoughts on advice and vulnerability

Anna Blake
Chair of the Vulnerable Clients Steering Group,
St. James's Place

31% of people receiving ongoing financial advice say the trigger point for seeking support was an unexpected life challenge

It's fair to say that, whilst advisers across the country have been supporting their clients through all circumstances and scenarios over many years, the industry's understanding of vulnerability, how to identify it in the first place and how to provide clients with appropriate support is evolving, rapidly steered by the Financial Conduct Authority's (FCA's) guidance in this area.

Heading this drive at SJP, I've seen a three-fold increase in the number of clients being identified as having characteristics of vulnerability since July 2020, and I'm sure others in the industry are seeing similar trends as we all focus on improving our understanding and strengthening the processes and approach that underpin the support we provide.

In chapter 4 of our Real Life Advice Report, we look at how financial advice can provide additional support for clients who may be experiencing a period of strain in their lives or for others where vulnerability is a permanent fixture. We also explore consumer awareness of the additional support available, their likelihood to discuss additional support needs with their financial adviser, and customers' current experiences of the level of support being offered. As we move forward as an industry and continue to improve our service to clients with characteristics of vulnerability, we hope this chapter provides some valuable reflections.

In previous chapters we've explored how financial advice, and the stability and confidence it brings, is a cornerstone of personal well-being. And we've looked at how our survey of 12,000 individuals clearly demonstrates advice plays a role well beyond pure financials.

That's no more evident than when life becomes that little bit more challenging. For 31% of people receiving ongoing financial advice, an unexpected life challenge such as bereavement, divorce, a serious illness, caring for loved ones, or becoming a single parent has been the trigger for seeking support. That's 2.5 million people across the UK seeking out professional advice in the first place because of their personal circumstances becoming challenging.

All circumstances that can affect decision-making or financial understanding and increase our risk of financial vulnerability.

2.5 million

people in the UK are seeking out professional advice because of circumstances becoming more challenging. The main reasons noted in our research were:

Bereavement	10%
Ageing parents	9%
Caring for loved ones	9%
Serious illness	8%
Becoming a single parent	8%
Divorce	7%

Indeed, financial vulnerability was the reason one of our clients – Ewelina – first sought advice.

When her son, Filip, was diagnosed with Down's syndrome, a fellow parent of a child with additional needs recommended she met their adviser Rhiannon Gogh, who specialises in financial advice for families with vulnerable dependants. As she says, Rhiannon's advice and support has been life changing. It's helped her ensure Filip will be taken care of in the future which has in turn set her mind at rest on that front.

Rhiannon is herself a mother of a child with autism and realised that, by researching and putting in place her own plans to protect him, she could in turn use that experience and knowledge in her role as an SJP adviser to help other parents and carers in similar situations.

Ewelina and Rhiannon's story

Ewelina's story: "Parents of children with additional needs worry about them all the time – but you don't think about them from a financial point of view."

"It came as quite a shock when my 6-month old son, Filip, was diagnosed with Down's syndrome. It's a parent's prerogative to worry about their children and there are constantly things that parents of children who have additional needs have to do. You think about them all the time, but you don't always think about them from a financial point of view. My initial focus was to ensure Filip had the best possible care in the present, and I tried not to dwell too much on the future. Over the years, I've received lots of charity support with Filip's physical, social and emotional needs, but when it came to planning for the future, there was nothing.

However, a fellow parent of a child with additional needs recommended that I met Rhiannon. Through our conversations, I realised there were many complicated financial issues I needed to consider regarding estate planning and making sure Filip would be taken care of in the future. She advised me to set up a trust for him. Without one, if he was to inherit half of our estate in future, he would then be responsible for managing his own financial affairs – something he would not be capable of doing. It was eye-opening for me. Over time she has helped our family put in place a number of things to ensure that financially, Filip's in the right position and his future is secure.

Rhiannon's advice and support has been life changing. After consulting her and making decisions about Filip's long-term future, I felt as though a weight had been lifted from my chest. It's a big relief knowing that everything is in place.

Parenting a child with Down's syndrome brings challenges, but it's also taught me to appreciate the everyday joys in life, the way Filip does. He is our sunshine."

Trusts are not regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

> "Rhiannon's advice and support has been life changing. After consulting her and making decisions about Filip's long-term future, I felt as though a weight had been lifted from my chest."

Rhiannon's story: "My goal is to ensure every family of a young person with special needs or disabilities, receives the right advice at the right time."

"As a mother of a child with autism, I know all too well the challenges that parents who are also carers face. I used to be worried about my son Tristan every single day; about what would happen to him when I was no longer here.

By researching and putting in place my own plans to protect him, I realised I could draw on that experience and knowledge to help other parents and carers in similar situations. Over the years, I've spoken to thousands of parents of children with special needs, additional needs or disabilities. They tend to have one thing in common: a worry and lack of awareness as to how to provide for and protect a vulnerable child when they are no longer here. They're juggling so much and putting financial plans in place for now and the future can be confusing and hard work. For example, various tax, benefits and education issues come into the picture when it comes to planning for a child with special educational needs. The lack of awareness among parents and guardians is causing vulnerable clients to suffer.

For myself, and the thousands of other parents in my position, there are many more things to consider than for parents of children without special or additional needs or a disability. When I help clients form a financial plan, the child must be at the centre. An adviser needs to know about that child, their capabilities and aspirations and what their parents are hoping to plan for. It's also important to consider mitigating risks and to map out the life of the child as best you can and align the planning to that, including life and retirement planning.

Having gone through the above for my own financial planning, I feel much more reassured about Tristan and his future. My goal is to ensure every family of a young person with special needs or disabilities, receives the right advice at the right time. Last year, I developed the Special Needs SENDFA (Special Education Needs and Disability Financial Advice) Pathway, and I'm working with the wider financial advice industry to ensure we can provide quality advice in this area to those who really need it."*

*This is separate and distinct to those products and services offered by St. James's Place.

"When I help clients form a financial plan, the child must be at the centre. An adviser needs to know about that child, their capabilities and aspirations and what their parents are hoping to plan for."

Another of our advisers, **Adam Johnson**, also tells his story of how he has developed his approach to vulnerable clients based on firsthand experience of when his grandmother went from being independent and living on her own to not being able to walk again after a fall. And how it gave him a whole new perspective as he dealt with her deteriorating health and long-term care needs over the following 10 years.

Adam's story

"Vulnerability is not a binary switch; it's about how things change and move."

"The dialogue around clients with characteristics of vulnerability needs to be reshaped, and we should be taking stock of what it means to be a vulnerable client and how to support them. Vulnerability is not a binary switch; it's about how things change and move. People can be vulnerable in terms of their capacity to make decisions because of environmental factors – the things that are happening around them – and these will come and go at different moments.

Earlier in my career, I had firsthand experience of suddenly becoming vulnerable. My grandmother went from being independent and living on her own to not being able to walk again after a fall that damaged her knee and broke her hip. When the accident happened, I was running a small practice and working from home, so we decided the best solution was to both sell our places and live together.

Over the next 10 years her health deteriorated. So professionally, I was dealing with vulnerable clients and long-term care issues in my day job, then coming home and managing carers and medication routines in my personal life. It gave me a whole new perspective.

Now when my clients talk to me about the problems they're facing, I truly understand where they are coming from. I think it's important for advisers to be as conscious of their clients' circumstances as possible. My experience with my grandmother really informed my desire to make sure clients get access to quality advice, as I know how much of a difference it can make."

"I was dealing with vulnerable clients and long-term care issues in my day job, then coming home and managing carers and medication routines in my personal life. It gave me a whole new perspective."

It's clear from both advisers' stories that their lived experiences have shaped how they approach advice for people who need additional support. There is much to learn from their level of care and how they have adopted new skills, language and communication.

52%

of people have never thought about discussing additional support or needs with their financial adviser.

However, as Rhiannon and Adam call out, both lack of awareness of the support available and reticence to start conversations is causing vulnerable clients to suffer. Our research shows the taboo around vulnerability with more than half of people who have received some form of financial advice stating they would be unlikely to discuss additional support needs.

Moreover, whilst a lot of good work is taking place across the industry, there are still significant improvements to be made. 1 in 5 (18%) people who have received advice say that little additional help or support was offered when they needed it, and 15% were simply directed towards charities of similar organisations. Only 14% of people who have received financial advice say they have been offered additional support that they weren't previously aware was available. Whilst the picture improves for those receiving ongoing advice, with 1 in 4 (23%) saying they have been offered additional help and support, the figures highlight the collective work ahead if we are to properly support the 50% of people the FCA estimates will be considered vulnerable at some point in their lifetime[1].

As Adam notes, we need to do as much as we can to reshape the dialogue around vulnerable clients.

Vulnerability is not applicable to a distinct segment of customers. It is about how things change and move. Alongside permanent situations that affect vulnerability, people can be vulnerable in terms of their capacity to make financial decisions because of environmental factors – the things that are happening around them – and these will come and go at different moments.

Those situations could be due to economic downturns. In a panic, people can gravitate towards quick fixes that may not be in their best longer term interests or take account of the full financial picture. Individuals may react emotionally to fluctuations in the stock market or economic indicators, selling investments at a loss or avoiding investing altogether. Or becoming vulnerable could be down to health crises, life events such as bereavement, divorce or unemployment, or the simple process of getting older: a process which may see us face specific challenges related to our financial knowledge or capacity, particularly as we deal with issues such as long-term care.

We see those situations reflected amongst our own clients marked as vulnerable, with the biggest drivers of vulnerability being:

1. **bereavement**
2. **low knowledge or confidence in managing finances**
3. **severe or long-term illness**
4. **relationship breakdown.**

But the reasons and situations are, of course, very broad.

[1] FCA letter to Chief Executives, 8 November 2023

Breaking the vulnerability barriers

So, what can we do to ensure people receive the additional support they require, and feel more confident to seek it? Alongside clear guidance from the regulator around what is expected of firms, Anna's five thoughts are:

1. Language

More of a debate needs to be had around language. The term vulnerability is a label that customers don't walk towards easily. They may be reluctant to disclose vulnerabilities because they worry that it will negatively impact how they are perceived or the services they receive. In many ways it does not help to illustrate the fundamental point that all customers are at risk of becoming vulnerable at some point in their life. We all face a spectrum of risk which can lead to our situations changing over time. We are currently doing a body of work around how we phrase questions and prompts in order to unearth challenges and vulnerabilities in a different way.

2. Sharing industry best practice

Coming together more to share learnings and best practice across the industry is in everyone's interest so we can understand what is working well to protect clients with characteristics of vulnerability and learn more from each other. SJP recently made our groundbreaking virtual reality training available industry-wide and a number of firms, through participation in working groups, are helping the Personal Investment Management & Financial Advice Association (PIMFA) and The Investment & Saving Alliance (TISA) develop vulnerable customer best practice guides and co-create an assessment tool. No one firm has all the answers. Creating a forum for shared knowledge is vital as this will enable us to innovate as an industry to ensure good outcomes for every vulnerable client.

3. Embedding across colleagues

Arming every adviser with the tools, training and support they need is a given, but we need to embed understanding into every corner of our business if we are to dispel myths around vulnerability. Mandatory training for all colleagues is an important step in this, but using initiatives such as national awareness campaigns, tools such as expert masterclasses, and alternative resources such as podcasts, can bring the subject to life in a more impactful way.

4. Harnessing technology

Technology has a growing role to play in leaving no client behind. The likes of online assessment and guidance tools can really help advisers both identify and support vulnerable clients. The introduction of AI speech analytics into contact centres is an exciting development in adding a different perspective in how we spot clients in vulnerable situations more easily, and technology will enhance our work as an industry to tackle this issue.

5. Building better financial resilience

Finally, advice has a significant role to play in mitigating the impact of vulnerability on financial decision-making by building better resilience in the first place. We know from our survey carried out in October 2023 that, despite the cost-of-living crisis, 76% of those with a financial plan in place were confident in their financial position and 54% described themselves as financially comfortable compared to 34% who do not have a plan*. There is no doubt that putting the fundamentals of sound financial planning in place reduces the urge to make impulsive financial decisions during crises.

*SJP Financial Health Report 2024. Survey conducted for St. James's Place by Opinium, among 6,000 UK adults between 16-25 October 2023. All results are weighted to nationally representative criteria.

In Chapter One of our Real Life Advice Report we outlined that of those receiving financial advice:

84%
say it has benefited them mentally and emotionally

33%
say it makes them feel more confident

26%
say it makes them feel less stressed

25%
say it makes them feel less vulnerable

Building broader financial resilience is named as a key benefit of ongoing advice by many people across the country – whether that's:

22%	having adequate protection in place
15%	being able to cover the money required for health-related issues
18%	covering unexpected expenses

Whilst financial vulnerability is a reality for many individuals, it doesn't have to dictate your financial future.

By seeking informed advice, prioritising mental health, and building resilience, you can navigate more challenging times with greater confidence. As an industry we need to get better at communicating that value and come together to address our gaps and champion our strengths. If we do so, we have an opportunity to make a real difference and demonstrate more clearly how advice is a force for good in supporting all clients at risk of vulnerability.

Chapter 5

Advice Priorities

Our SJP expert's thoughts on advice priorities

Claire Trott
Divisional Director of Retirement and Holistic Planning, St. James's Place

In Chapter 5 of our Real Life Advice Report we look at where the nation is likely to look for financial advice in the future and specifically the advice priorities for the next six months.

Whilst the nation is seeking advice on a range of priorities – from the basics of better budgeting to inheritance, Wills and estate planning – it's the dilemma of how to achieve a comfortable retirement that's at the top of the list.

Our research shows that, regardless of wealth and financial assets, across the country people would find retirement planning advice more beneficial than anything else. That's the same for those with under £20,000 of financial assets as it is for those with over £250,000. 1 in 5 people (19%) say they would find retirement planning advice the most beneficial in the next six months, above general investment and savings advice in second place (17%) and budgeting in third place (14%).

Our own insights tell us that the Budget has only amplified demand for advice on retirement.

More than 6,000 clients joined our post-Budget webinar on the subject alone. Weeks of pre-Budget speculation around pensions and tax free cash created significant uncertainty for UK savers and investors and led to many rushed conversations around withdrawing tax free cash despite the many downsides of doing so. Post the Budget, the planned taxation of inherited pensions is again prompting people to question the value of pensions as they plan longer term. It is vital these changes are managed carefully to ensure pension confidence is not dented. It will also be imperative for individuals to understand all the options before they jump to action.

Will writing involves the referral to a service that is separate and distinct to those offered by St. James's Place.

Wills are not regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

What is the nation seeking advice on in the next six months?

Retirement planning	19%
Investment & savings advice in general	17%
How to budget better	14%
Wills planning	13%
Putting an overall financial plan in place	11%
Keeping my financial plan on track	11%
Getting a better mortgage deal	10%
Inheritance & estate planning	10%
Understanding all the assets I have	10%
Managing debt	10%
Utilising tax breaks such as ISAs	9%
Making sure I have the right protection in place	9%

Whilst retirement planning is the top advice priority, our research highlights how a focus on retirement planning often comes too late. In fact, the peak age for it being an advice priority is 55 years old.

The issue with the impact of speculation and change is that it drives short term reactions. This is rarely helpful given retirement planning must be seen through a long-term lens and, particularly so, against a backdrop where people are already struggling to adopt a long-term approach. We see this in our research.

The generational divide:

Gen Z

For those aged 18-27, **advice on how to budget better is the priority over the next six months for 1 in 4 (26%)**. Retirement sits in fifth place at 12% behind general investment and savings advice (18%), putting an overall plan in place (16%), and advice on managing debt (15%).

Millennials

For those aged 28-43, **better budgeting is in first place (22%)** with general advice on investment and savings (21%) in second. Retirement planning advice makes the top three with 1 in 5 (18%) naming it as their advice priority, on par with the demand for advice on mortgages.

Gen X

For those aged 44-59, **approaching a third (30%) name retirement planning as their advice priority** for the next six months. This is twice as important as receiving general investment and savings advice and Wills planning both sitting at 16% in equal second place. Budgeting sits in fourth with 12% naming it their advice priority.

Your home may be repossessed if you do not keep up repayments on your mortgage.

The value of an investment with St. James's Place will be directly linked to the performance of the funds you select and the value can therefore go down as well as up. You may get back less than you invested.

Will writing involves the referral to a service that is separate and distinct to those offered by St. James's Place.

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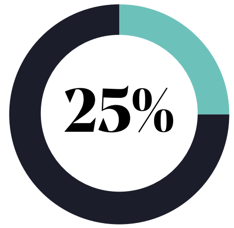
How delay can affect a pension fund

Approaching a third (30%) of Gen X (44-59 year-olds) name retirement planning as their advice priority for the next six months, whereas it is much further down the rankings for Millennials (28-43 year-olds) and Gen Z (18-27 year-olds) sitting in third and fifth place respectively.

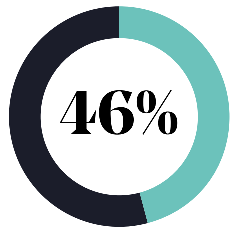
Whilst it is perhaps unsurprising that advice on matters such as how to budget better, general investment and savings advice and managing debt are more pressing at a younger age, we also know that it's more important than ever to start retirement planning early.

Our analysis shows that if a 30-year-old made a gross investment of £5,000 each year into a pension scheme, they would have a projected fund of £268,000 available at age 60 based on the assumptions highlighted in orange below. Just a five-year delay would result in a £67,000 reduction to that retirement fund and a fifteen-year delay, starting contributions at age 45, a £169,000 reduction. At that point, you'd have to increase annual contributions to around £13,500 per year to achieve the same retirement fund of £268,000 at age 60. So, the key decision is when we start to make worthwhile investments. That will probably be the most important driver in terms of what we're able to do in retirement and when our retirement can start.

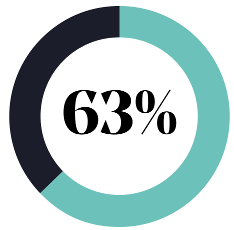
Ultimately, the sooner we start, the more choices we have later.



Start planning
25 years to retirement
=25% reduction in fund



Start planning
20 years to retirement
=46% reduction in fund



Start planning
15 years to retirement
=63% reduction in fund

	Fund value	Reduction in fund	Percentage reduction in fund	Increase in annual contributions needed to provide a fund of £268,000
5-year delay	£201,000	£67,000	25%	£1,656 pa
10-year delay	£146,000	£122,000	46%	£4,200 pa
15-year delay	£99,000	£169,000	63%	£8,508 pa

The example is only an illustration and actual investment returns may be more or less than those assumed in the illustration. It assumes that the average annual investment growth before charges is 4.60% each year and investment charges of 1.96% each year. Contributions are invested on the same day each year in a pension and are shown before charges are taken into account. Please note that these benefits are not guaranteed. Benefits depend on how the investment grows and its tax treatment. Contributions are not limited by the annual allowance or by earnings.

The value of a St. James's Place investment will be directly linked to the performance of the funds you select and the value can, therefore, go down as well as up. You may get back less than you invested.

Why the delay?

It's easy to understand the drivers behind people pushing retirement planning down the line.

Higher cost of living in the short term is biting into people's ability to contribute and save today so that they are better off tomorrow. More significantly though are the larger long-term trends which mean the retirement landscape is unrecognisable to what it was only twenty years ago.

Official government data highlights this shift. Defined Benefit (DB) pension schemes, in which the company would guarantee a proportion of final salary, are almost a thing of the past. In 2006, 3.5 million private sector employees belonged to these schemes whereas in 2022 that number stood at 900,000[1].

The rest of the 27.4 million private sector workforce[2] rely on Defined Contributions (DC) schemes where the size of your pot depends on how much you as an employee put in and how your employer is prepared to match. However, unsurprisingly, the retirement gulf between the two types of schemes remains vast despite auto-enrolment increasing participation in workplace pensions. According to the Institute of Fiscal Studies[3], 6 in 10 (61%) of working age private sector employees making contributions in DC schemes are saving less than 8% of their earnings against a recommended average of around 15% – 20% depending on when you start. Although the auto enrolment minimum is 8%, this is only on a band of earnings and won't necessarily equate to that much when you take account of the thresholds. Contributions don't have to be made on earnings up to £6,240 and above £50,270, although many employers provide significantly more.

Auto enrolment schemes are not regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

[1] UK Parliament, 'Defined benefit pension scheme inquiry', April 2023

[2] House of Commons, 'UK labour market statistics', Nov 2024

[3] IFS Report, 'Challenges for the UK pension scheme; the case for a pensions review', April 2023

6 in 10 (61%) of working age private sector employees making contributions in DC (Defined Contributions) schemes are saving less than 8% of their earnings against a recommended average of around 15% – 20%.

Nick's story

"My property portfolio was my pension plan – until I met my adviser".

"Like many people working in the building trade or property sector, I hadn't given pensions a second thought, and just thought my property holdings would be my eventual pension. However, I've always been open-minded about taking financial advice and met James about ten years ago to see how he might be able to help me. From just our initial conversation, I realised I should think about my pension arrangements. Describing my situation to James, I remembered I also had a small Army pension, which I'd almost forgotten about. Like many people with employer pensions, it's easy to sit back and let the pensions provider take care of contributions and where they're invested.

My dad wasn't very good with money and my mum didn't understand money at all, with the result that our house was repossessed in my early teens. We lived in rented accommodation after that. My parents separated, and me, my brother and sister and my mum shared one bedroom with mattresses on the floor. More than anything else, that taught me that putting a roof over your head is a top priority. We learned the value of sensible decisions first-hand, and I want to pass this onto my children.

With James's help, I've organised ISAs and investments for them. The more they understand about their investments and that it's their money, the more they're interested. My son refers to James as 'his' financial adviser already! As a self-employed single parent, it's reassuring to know that if anything did happen to me, my children will have someone they can speak to and get sensible advice from. To keep yourself financially secure, you don't need to earn a fortune. You just need to make good decisions about the money you've got. That, for me, meant talking – and listening – to James."

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"My son refers to James as 'his' financial adviser already! As a self-employed single parent, it's reassuring to know that if anything did happen to me, my children will have someone they can speak to and get sensible advice from."

Changing trends

Whilst some of today's retirees may be able to rely on their house or property as an asset to help fund their retirement years, that simply won't be true for future generations.

Unlike Nick's story, even the concept of using property as a pension plan won't be on the table.

Future generations of retirees are grappling with unique economic circumstances compared to their parents and grandparents which makes home ownership increasingly challenging. This means many will still be paying off their mortgages in retirement or continuing to pay rent, going against traditional plans of having less outgoings in retirement.

This will, in turn, change the shape of savings earmarked for the next generation who are a third less likely to pass down assets whether that's property or cash. Whilst 65% of current retirees expect to pass down property to their family through inheritance, this figure drops to just 45% among those yet to retire. Similarly, 60% of current retirees plan to pass down cash savings contrasting with only 40% of future retirees who share the same intention. These trends may shift or accelerate given recent changes announced in the Budget.

All of these trends will impact the funds available for the nation's future retirees.

65%

of current retirees expect to pass down **property** to their family through inheritance

45%

of those yet to retire expect to pass down **property** to their family through inheritance

60%

of current retirees plan to pass down **cash** to their family through inheritance

40%

of those yet to retire expect to down **cash** to their family through inheritance

So, what can we do to change our retirement outcomes?

There is no doubt that long term government policy around pensions will shape all of our retirement futures to some degree. The government's Pensions Review is a positive step forward and it will be vital that solutions address the trends that are shaping the nation's retirement landscape over the coming decades.

However, in the meantime, it's key that a challenging backdrop does not deter people from taking individual action. Our retirement futures rest in our own hands more than ever and we should all do what we can to take as much personal control as possible.

As we've highlighted earlier in the chapter, making an early commitment to retirement saving is vital. Putting money aside for the future has to be seen as a necessary expense and pension contributions an integral part of budgeting. Monthly contributions can help with cash flow and are a solution to building pension savings into your budget. They also 'smooth out' the effect of stock market fluctuations and reduce the worry that some people may feel around buying into the market at the 'wrong' time.

Whilst these are some basic principles, this is where advice can be transformational. To turn inaction into action by providing people with the confidence and reassurance around the steps they are taking.

Mark and Blanche's story on the next page illustrates just that.

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Monthly contributions can help with cash flow and are a solution to building pension savings into your budget. They also 'smooth out' the effect of stock market fluctuations.

Mark and Blanche's story

"We questioned why we were working – but retirement felt like a pipe dream".

"When my husband Mark and I met Danni, our financial adviser, in 2018 we were living hectic lives, working in senior positions in the media industry. We were well paid, but the responsibility meant a lot of pressure. The more stressful it got, the unhealthier we became. We usually spent most of the week apart – I was in central London on weekdays and joined Mark and our two sons in Wales at weekends. We were both exhausted and constantly felt like we were on a hamster wheel.

We found ourselves wondering why we were working – but retirement initially felt like a pipe dream. We'd both been contributing to our workplace pension scheme, but never really understood what it was worth. All my life, I'd assumed our house would be our pension and we would downsize when we got older, to have enough money to live on. Danni helped us understand our financial situation – she made it all make sense. Instead of focussing on how much we had or wanted, she helped us think about what we wanted life to look like in future. We realised our priorities were to travel, to leave a legacy to our adult children and to remain in our family home. Danni calculated how much we'd need to fund this lifestyle we wanted without having to downsize. Then she worked out a tax-efficient plan that allowed us both to semi-retire in 2019, when I was 57 and Mark was 53.

Danni helped us get our finances in shape. She tracked down the various pots we'd paid into over the years and advised us to use some of our pension to pay off our mortgage. We've benefited from her advice in so many ways. We feel financially secure in our future, we're healthier than before, but most importantly we've had more time for family. We've worked very, very hard to save all this money for our future, and now that money is working very, very hard to give us the life we imagined."

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"Danni helped us understand our financial situation – she made it all make sense. Instead of focussing on how much we had or wanted, she helped us think about what we wanted life to look like in future".

Working with their adviser to pin down their long-term goals in retirement – and the route to achieve them – has enabled Mark and Blanche to put plans in place and feel financially secure for the future. It's also reduced stress and unlocked family time in the here and now. As they say, retirement can feel like a pipe dream and there can be a whole range of assumptions around how it's going to be funded. Taking financial advice has allowed them to understand where they stood in terms of pension provision, to visualise what they'd like life to look like in retirement, and then put the pragmatic plans in place to get them there.

Similarly, Nick's story shows how positive action has enabled him to sort out both his own pension planning but also ensure that his children adopt the right habits around their finances and are planning properly for the future as well. As he says, he's realised you don't need to earn a fortune. You just need to make good decisions about the money you've got.

As we look to the future, it's clear the retirement choices for the next generation will be different and more difficult. Financial advice has a significant role to play in helping people across the country navigate that change so they can achieve the life post work they are looking for.

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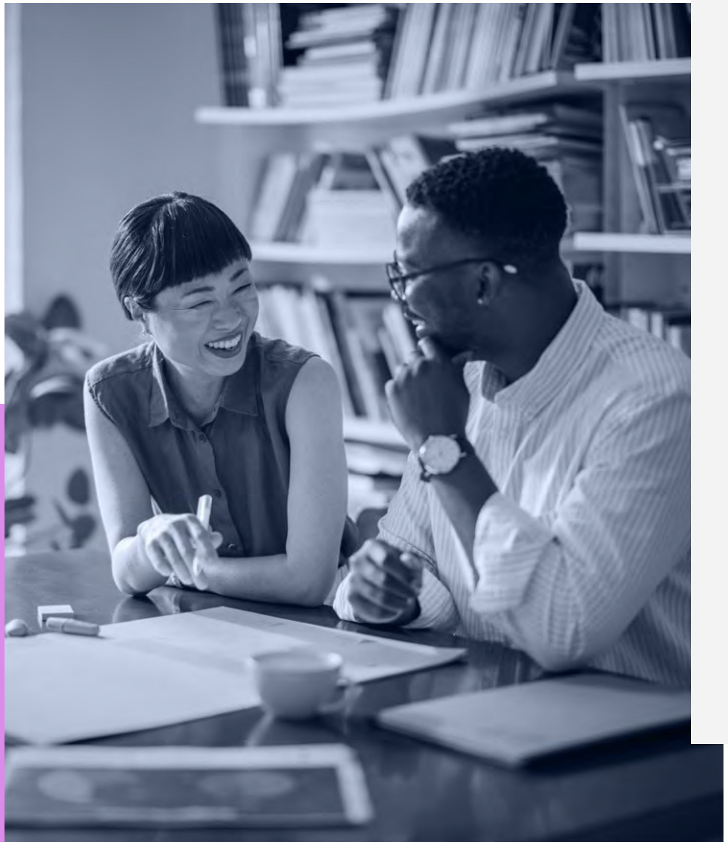
Taking financial advice has allowed them to understand where they stood in terms of pension provision, to visualise what they'd like life to look like in retirement.

Chapter 6

A new generation of advice

In the final chapter of our Real Life Advice Report, we want to look forward and to consider what the future of advice looks like in a rapidly changing financial landscape.

The best place to start is by looking at the next generation of financial advisers and financial advice clients: **what are young people looking for from financial advice and guidance; what challenges are they facing and how might advice help; and what must we do to meet the needs of a new generation of clients?**



The real life advice drivers for younger generations

First, we know that we're dealing with a generation that has a growing need for advice. However, only one in five (18%) of 18-34 year-olds who don't take professional advice, think they would find it beneficial in the future.

But when we consider the financial challenges they face, there's a clear need to raise further awareness.

The financial landscape for younger generations is marked by a paradox of growing challenges and emerging opportunities. On the one hand, today's young adults face significant hurdles:

- the dream of homeownership is being deferred as house prices outpace income growth, and
- the decline of defined benefit pension schemes means that individuals must take greater responsibility for their own retirement savings.

These pressures are compounded by rising living costs and a more fluid job market, which often disrupts long-term financial planning. On the other hand, research by King's Court Trust says that over £5.5tn of wealth will be handed down to younger generations over the next 30 years[1], the "great wealth transfer" that will offer some the promise of financial relief and new opportunities. Regardless of how this plays out, one thing is certain: younger generations will need to navigate an increasingly complex financial environment. The interplay of delayed milestones, evolving economic conditions, and new sources of wealth demands more nuanced and proactive financial strategies to achieve long term financial goals.

The evolution of the financial landscape for younger generations also presents both challenges and opportunities for the financial advice sector in the UK. As traditional financial milestones are delayed and young adults face greater economic uncertainty, advisers must adapt their services to be more flexible, accessible, and relevant. This means shifting from a focus solely on long-term investment and retirement planning to offering more comprehensive, event-driven advice such as debt management, mortgage advice, and strategies for managing everyday financial pressures.

[1] Kings Court Trust: Research Paper 2 - Wealth Transfer in the UK

As we began to explore in Chapter 5, this is clearly evidenced in the issues young people focus on when considering the areas of advice they'd find most beneficial. If we look in our survey data at the top ten challenges they'd like help with, we find that budgeting comes out top (cited by just under a quarter – 24% – of survey respondents aged 18-34 compared with just 14% of survey respondents overall).

Next on the list is investment and savings advice generally (cited by 19% of 18-34s), followed by putting an overall financial plan in place (18%), getting a better mortgage deal (17%), and debt management (16%).

What this reveals is how immediate the financial pressures are on younger generations and the degree to which this is influencing their money management priorities.

Thinking about your finances, if you were to access direct professional financial advice, which areas of advice would you find most beneficial in the next six months? (Showing the top ten areas cited by 18-34s.)

	All respondents	18-34s
Budgeting	14%	24%
Investment and savings advice generally	17%	19%
Putting an overall financial plan in place	11%	18%
Getting a better mortgage deal	10%	17%
Debt management	10%	16%
Retirement and pension planning	19%	14%
Understanding all the assets I have	10%	14%
Making sure I have the right insurance and protection in place for myself/my family	9%	14%
Financial forecasting	8%	13%
Building a more balanced investment portfolio	8%	13%

It's a story familiar to our St. James's Place advisers. Take Charlotte, for example. As a young mum, she knows the pressures that younger generations are facing financially and sees this reflected in both her clients' needs and how she seeks to advise them. As she says, younger generations tend not to be in a position to maximise immediate savings opportunities. They simply don't have the spare cash. Instead, they need protection to ensure that they and their families will be looked after should the worst happen. And they need to consolidate the complex financial arrangements that can result from the more itinerant careers young people often pursue.

An adviser perspective: Charlotte Watson

"I'm 36, so I'm young compared with the average adviser. And I'm relatively niche because I'm female as well as young. But that means I do have a lot of younger clients walking towards me. A lot of the approaches I get are because I'm very active on social media, and in fact, the main source of my client base comes from my presence on social media. I'm attracting people who resonate with me, the tone of how I speak, how I am describing things, being a working mum, running my own business: we've got a connection. They want a person who understands them, understands the things they worry about, and understands the things they're working towards.

"If people are coming to me and they are in their 30s, many of them are not going to be saying they need to maximise their ISA this year. Unfortunately, that's not the position they're going to be in. They haven't got the capital so they're not going to be big investors.

"What they do need, though, is protection. They may not have life cover on the lovely new house that they bought, and they may have a child on the way. Putting in place life cover with critical illness gives them peace of mind, so if something awful happens to them that the surviving parent and the children still have a secure future.

"Also, young people do tend to job hop. But as they move from job to job, what do they leave behind, like breadcrumbs? It's all their old pensions, and they want someone to help them simplify and take control of that.

My story

I had no idea I could become a financial adviser off the back of my unrelated degree. Indeed, some people might not even need a degree. I think that people don't realise that it's a job path that they could take. Having transferable skills from another career and using your life experience will all help you to resonate with people. You will find your niche, and you will then be able to help people who are like you. And that's the main thing with financial advice: finding someone that you gel with.

"What's important is showcasing our industry, saying "look at this amazing diverse bunch of people that we have, that are individuals who are all working in their own way to help their clients meet their goals".

I'm about to do a guest speaker slot in my local primary school where my child has just started. They're probably not going to think of financial advisers when they think of typical job routes, but they will think of mechanics and plumbers, and they'll think of doctors and vets.

"Now, what do we have in common with doctors and nurses and vets and mechanics and plumbers? We fix problems. We sort people out. They come to us with an issue, we help them, and then they feel better about what we've done together to allow them to understand and take control of their own situation. We can show those young children that being in finance isn't a scary industry, miles away from everybody.

"It is something that is real life. It's about people skills and helping people and being passionate enough to help people in the right way. And I think that's how we can start to encourage young people to consider this as a career."

Building real life advice relationships with younger generations

A striking aspect of Charlotte's story is the way in which she uses social media to build connections with young people who are looking for financial advice. This won't, of course, be the right approach for everyone, but it speaks to how young people who have grown up in the digital world are often more open to different ways of seeking out information and support.

We found this in our research, too. When looking at where young people get information about finances and money, we find distinct differences between their habits and preferences and those of the population as a whole. They are much more likely to turn to friends (31% of young people compared to 22% of all our survey respondents), but most interestingly they are much more likely to use social media channels (31% compared to 14%) and to listen to specific social media influencers (17% compared to 7%). And while less likely to use more traditional platforms like personal finance websites (39% compared to 48%) or print media (14% compared to 18%), they more commonly listen to newer media like podcasts (16% compared to 8%).

31%

of young people would turn to friends to get information about finances and money.

Which informal sources, if any, do you go to for information about finances and your money?

	All respondents	18-34s
Parents	21%	41%
Personal finance websites (E.g. Money Saving Expert)	48%	39%
Friends	22%	31%
Social media channels (e.g. YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, X)	14%	31%
Other family members	18%	21%
Siblings	11%	18%
Employer	9%	17%
Social media influencers	7%	17%
Broadcast Media (TV/Radio)	14%	16%
Podcasts	8%	16%
Traditional national print media (e.g. newspapers, magazines)	18%	14%
Grandparents	5%	13%

But one thing that will never change is the importance of the advice relationship itself. Take Daniel's story. Career success offered him the chance to save but came at the cost of the time he needed to navigate the myriad options available in today's market. So, when he needed some direction, he welcomed the chance to talk to one of our advisers. But that was just the beginning. Savings advice morphed into retirement planning, and when the time came for Daniel to get on the property ladder, his adviser helped him with that, too. As he says, Daniel knows that his financial circumstances and priorities will evolve as he gets older, but having his adviser by his side gives him the confidence that he will make the right choices for the future he wants to have.

"Right now, and with Paul's advice, I feel confident in what I'm able to save. I feel more fortunate than my mum and dad were at my age."

Daniel's story

"Researching how to maximise my money felt like a full-time job"

"I've always been a good saver. When I was about 9 or 10, I really wanted a PlayStation Portable, and put my £1 pocket money aside each week, plus money I received for my birthday, until I'd saved about £100 and could buy the console. I still like to save money now and ever since I started working, I've been putting some of my earnings aside. I save between a quarter and a third of my salary each month. I take after my dad and my granddad – we're quite risk averse, and we like to save money.

"When I moved to my current job, my salary doubled, and I was able to build my savings pot substantially. However, I was conscious that my money could be working harder for me. I could only save a certain amount into my Help to Buy ISA every month, and while I was also putting £100 into Premium Bonds as an emergency fund, it didn't seem sensible to put more than this amount in. I researched different options online about how to maximise my cash but came to the conclusion that it would be like a full-time job to do the best thing that I could with my money – and I already had a full-time job.

"A family member recommended a financial adviser, Paul, and it was great to frankly talk about my money and the choices I had with an expert. I wanted the option to retire at 50, and Paul modelled a few different scenarios to show how I might be able to reach that goal. It was so helpful to see everything in one picture. A few years ago, with Paul's guidance, I bought my first home. It needed work and I was so grateful that I had built enough savings to cover this. Paul was so supportive and gave me up-to-date advice, reassurance and answered all my questions. Buying a house and getting it shipshape was the most stressful thing I've ever done. It was nice to have someone who had visibility of my finances to talk to and have practical conversations about the process.

"As I get older, I'm aware my goals and priorities may change, and I'll need to adapt my finances accordingly. Right now, and with Paul's advice, I feel confident in what I'm able to save. I feel more fortunate than my mum and dad were at my age."

Please note that Help to Buy ISAs are no longer available.

The value of an investment with St. James's Place will be directly linked to the performance of the funds selected and may fall as well as rise. You may get back less than the amount invested.

Attracting the next generation of financial advisers

If personal relationships continue to be critical to delivering real life financial advice, then the next question is how we can keep building them. The answer lies in ensuring that we continue to attract brilliant people to our profession, and in particular, making sure that people in need of financial advice can look to us and see people they can relate to, people with similar experiences and reference points, and people who will understand their financial pressures and goals.

That brings us back to our adviser Charlotte and her experience of becoming a financial adviser. As she says, we need to proudly showcase what we do and the impact we have, demonstrating first that we are problem-solvers at heart who use expertise to help people navigate challenges and realise their goals. Secondly, whilst finance has always been a complex topic for many, it is not an esoteric pursuit that exists only in spreadsheets – it is the stuff of real life, driven by a passion for supporting people when they need it most.

Conclusion: reflecting on our Real Life Advice Report

Reflecting on our Real Life Advice Report

As we come to the end of our Real Life Advice Report, it's an opportunity to reflect on all the insights we've shared. The data is compelling. In today's world, rising living costs, delayed homeownership, and the decline of traditional pension schemes have created immense pressures for younger generations. Yet, there is also the promise of the great wealth transfer for some, which could redefine their financial opportunities. These factors make financial planning more critical – and yet more complex – than ever before.

It's debatable whether the world has become any more uncertain than it was before. However, our greater access to information from many sources has certainly influenced how uncertain we feel. And an entirely natural instinct is to feel under threat, which may mean responding in ways that aren't in tune with long term plans or interests.

Our report highlights that, when people receive ongoing advice, they not only benefit financially but they also have a stronger sense of financial security. This has incredibly important benefits to mental and emotional wellbeing and reinforces the essential role that advice plays. Especially at times when the airwaves play dramatic narratives.

The adviser and client stories we've shared have shown both the remarkable but also entirely typical ways that financial advice can positively impact lives. We've seen how it has empowered individuals to overcome challenges, realise their aspirations, and build resilient futures. We've also seen that even those initially sceptical of financial advice can find life-changing benefits. So, it's critical that we continue to break down the barriers preventing people from accessing the advice and guidance that can help them.

Misplaced perceptions and outdated views of financial advice keep millions of people from experiencing the benefits that could help them navigate today's increasingly complex financial landscape. But acknowledging this is only the beginning.

What can we do to help?

First, we need to attract and train more financial advisers to the profession. To inspire more talent to enter our profession, we must show people that financial advice is a meaningful, people-focused career that can help transforms lives. The St. James's Place Financial Adviser Academy is already making strides, but we must continue our efforts across the industry to draw in people from diverse backgrounds and experiences to better reflect the changing society in which we live in.

Second, we must find ways to fill the gap between guidance and full holistic advice. The Government and Financial Conduct Authority's Advice Guidance Boundary Review presents a pivotal opportunity. The proposed models of 'Simplified advice' and 'Targeted Support' could help reach more people, but we must tread carefully to protect consumers while making support widely accessible.

Finally, we need a coordinated campaign across the profession to change perceptions around financial advice. Education and awareness are key. We must do more to collectively leverage the insights from this report and come together as an industry to illustrate how advice can make a tangible difference and extend our outreach to those who feel that advice "isn't for them".

The role of financial advice has never been more important, nor the need for it more urgent. Whatever someone's circumstances there should be help and advice that's accessible. Because when we achieve that, we unlock the potential for individuals, families, and our society to thrive.

Mark FitzPatrick
CEO, St. James's Place

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