INSIGHT

ISSUE 29
A WEALTH OF ADVICE

ARE YOU AFFECTED BY THE 60% TAX TRAP?

ArmstrongWatson®
Financial Planning & Wealth Management

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

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WELCOME

Welcome to our latest issue of Insight – A Wealth of Advice

Thank you again to those who participated in our recent survey and shared their views about Insight. We have listened to the feedback you gave us and took the decision to rebrand our client magazine and its layout. You will see this evolving in this edition and the next – our 30th edition since its launch. We now include a lifestyle piece and an example of how we have helped one of our clients achieve their goals and dreams, alongside our financial planning features. We will continue to listen to what you want to see in future editions so please don't hesitate to speak to your local consultant.

Also included in this edition of Insight:

Am I entitled to my partner's financial assets if we are unmarried? Cohabiting couples, who do not have the same legal protections as those who are married or in civil partnerships, need to know where they stand should one of them die or if the relationship breaks down.

What is the 60% high-income tax trap? It is well known that the UK tax system is complicated at best, with numerous tax pitfalls hidden in plain sight. You may be caught out unknowingly following changes to tax bands and thresholds.

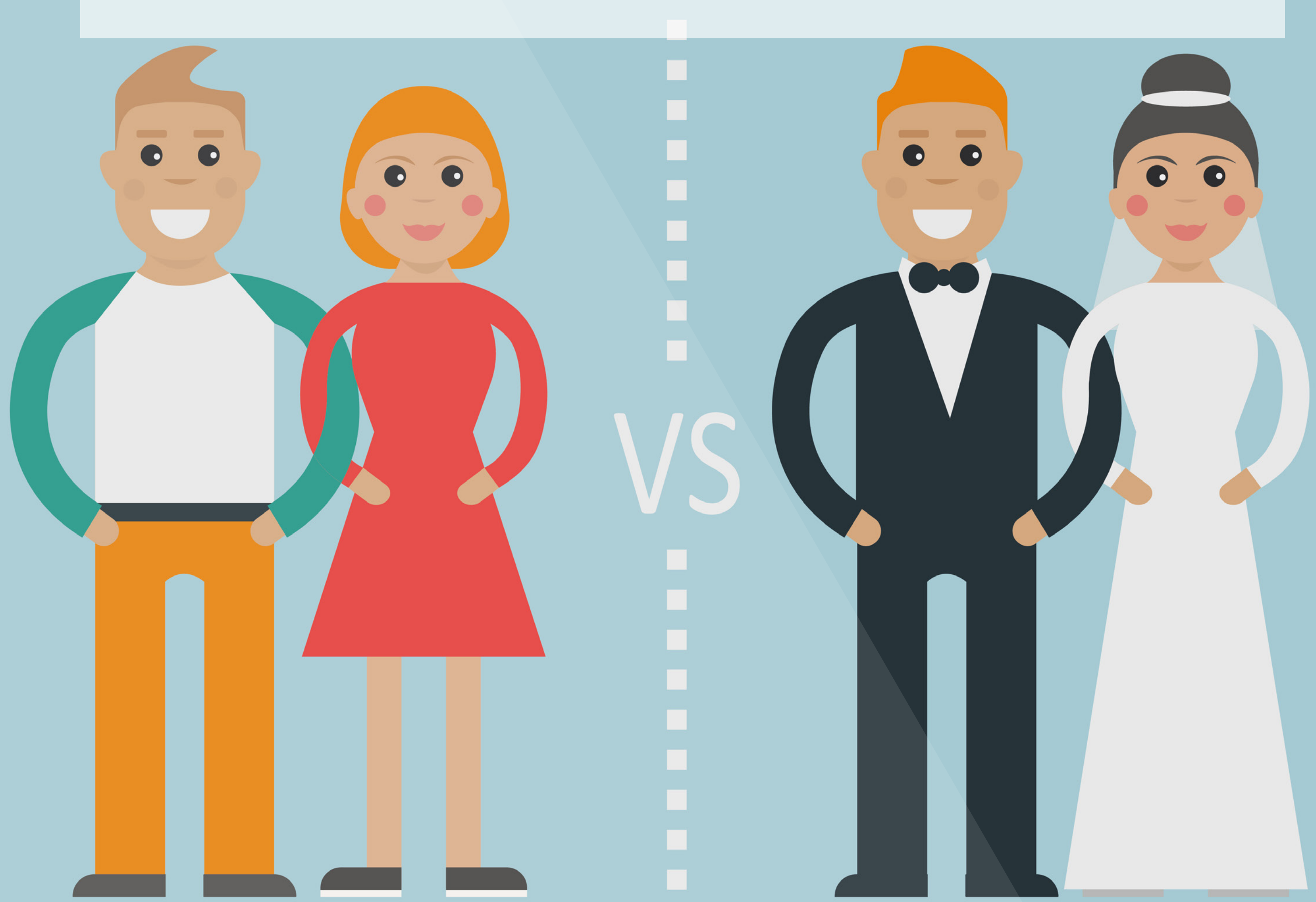
Important tax tips for university students and their parents If you have a child who is about to go to university, there are a few tax planning points you may wish to consider.

We hope you enjoy this issue of our magazine. If there are any topics you would like us to cover in a future edition of Insight please get in touch. If you would prefer to download a digital copy or subscribe to new issues electronically, please visit www.armstrongwatson.info/Insight.

PAUL DICKSON
CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND MANAGING PARTNER
ARMSTRONG WATSON LLP

AM I ENTITLED TO MY PARTNER'S FINANCIAL ASSETS IF WE ARE UNMARRIED?

Being frank about your finances is important in any relationship. But cohabiting couples in particular, who do not have the same legal protections as those who are married or in civil partnerships, need to know where they stand should one of them die or the relationship break down.



Many are unaware of their position. A 2022 Women and Equalities Committee report included a reminder that 46% of people in England and Wales wrongly assume that couples living together are in a 'common law' marriage – a concept which does not, in fact, exist in UK law.

This misconception is a problem as there are now 3.6m unmarried couples living together in the UK, more than two times the 1.5m there were 27 years ago.

The legal position in England and Wales has not changed significantly since then, with the Government recently rejecting calls to give more legal rights to cohabiting couples. However, there has been one moderate concession, with unmarried people now entitled to claim State bereavement benefits should their partner die.

Protecting financial rights while cohabiting

While this change is welcome, it still means cohabiting partners do not inherit assets tax-free if their partner dies — unless the estate is under £325,000 and left to them in a will – and may not inherit anything at all if there is no will. They may also not be in line to receive funds from pensions or life insurance policies. Buying a property together or having children does not automatically give you these rights — so couples in this situation, who have ongoing financial responsibilities, need to plan their finances carefully.

Surprisingly, Scottish Widows' research found that only half (52%) of unmarried adults in a relationship knew whether or not their partner had a life insurance policy. The research also showed that four out of 10 people with this cover (43%) had taken no steps to ensure their other half would receive a payout in the event of their death.

Address challenging topics if not married

Many couples — married and unmarried — find it difficult to talk about money, particularly when it also involves more challenging topics, like discussing serious illness or death. But there are simple, inexpensive ways to ensure you are providing financial security for your partner and any children, whatever the future holds.

Cohabitees can help protect themselves by taking the following three steps:

- Start talking: Have an open and frank discussion about money, covering earnings, assets and debts, held individually or jointly.
- Check property ownership: Your property could be owned as a 'joint tenancy' or 'tenancy in common'. Will the arrangement meet your needs if one of you dies?
- Write a will: These can be individual or 'mirror wills' for couples setting out who inherits assets and looks after any children in the event of one or both partners dying.
- Nominate your partner as a beneficiary on your pension or life insurance policy: This generally involves filling out one form, which can often be done online.

At Armstrong Watson, we provide bespoke tax planning, financial planning and wealth management all under one roof. If you would like advice and support, please get in touch.

CHELSEA WHITTOCK

FINANCIAL PLANNING CONSULTANT – CARLISLE

> **MANY COUPLES — MARRIED AND UNMARRIED — FIND IT DIFFICULT TO TALK ABOUT MONEY, PARTICULARLY WHEN IT ALSO INVOLVES MORE CHALLENGING TOPICS, LIKE DISCUSSING SERIOUS ILLNESS OR DEATH.**

IMPORTANT TAX TIPS FOR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AND THEIR PARENTS

Going to university and getting that first taste of independence is an exciting step for students. There's a lot to consider and parents may of course wish to support their children financially where possible.

If you have a child who is about to go to university, there are a few tax planning points you both may wish to consider:

Funding your children through university

Many parents plan to provide their child with an income so that they will not need to work or to minimise the need for them to take out a loan whilst they are at university. Usually, this income is paid out of your net income i.e. after tax. However, if you own some income-producing assets, such as a share of the family company or investments, and you do not require the capital, it may be possible to transfer these assets into trust for the benefit of your children, who are over 18. Structured correctly, this could allow any income received on these assets to be passed directly to your children, making use of their personal allowance and, potentially, their basic rate band in order to reduce the tax burden, on you, of this income.

Income Tax on student earnings

Many believe that students are exempt from paying tax; this is not the case. However, every individual can earn up to the personal allowance, currently £12,570, per year, before tax needs to be deducted.

If they work only during the holidays, they could end up with an incorrect tax code, which would result in Income Tax being deducted from their earnings. In this case, a tax repayment claim, form R40, can be submitted after the year-end in order to reclaim any overpaid tax.

> “MANY BELIEVE THAT STUDENTS ARE EXEMPT FROM PAYING TAX; THIS IS NOT THE CASE.”

Purchasing a student house

Finally, with the costs of student accommodation equating to a large proportion of their outgoings, you may be considering purchasing a property for your child to live in whilst at university. It is important that you are aware of the tax implications of this. If purchasing in your own name, the 3% Stamp Duty Land Tax second property surcharge is likely to apply. In addition, on sale of the property, Capital Gains Tax would be due on any increase in value.

Purchasing the property in your child's name could prevent this but would involve giving away the capital and your child would then be able to sell the property, without your knowledge, should they wish.

We can advise and assist you in setting up a trust, which would allow you to structure the purchase in such a way as to get the best of both worlds; allowing you to retain control over the property whilst being able to benefit from the reliefs available to your child.

Financial planning for university fees

If you're able to plan ahead and make savings or investments before your child goes to university it can be beneficial. Our financial planning team also has some advice about the options you may wish to consider.

Parents looking to pay university fees for their children may want to either invest a lump sum, pay out of income, or set up a regular savings scheme to provide funds to cover future fees. There are several options available to help make fees more affordable, and they can be both tax-efficient and flexible.

Currently, depositing the money into a savings account doesn't offer as much potential for capital growth as cash tends to not keep pace with inflation. An alternative option to cash-saving accounts is to invest the money in stocks and shares. However, this presents taking on additional risk and you need to consider how much risk you wish to take with each investment. On the flip side, returns from stocks and shares can outperform cash and regularly does.

Working out how best to invest for education fees involves determining your own attitude to risk, investment timeframe and how you wish to pay the fees. Another option is using your annual ISA allowance, which permits tax-efficient contributions of up to £20,000.

Don't forget that gifts out of normal expenditure are normally free of inheritance tax and paying in a lump sum and surviving for seven years can also be inheritance tax efficient. This could be very useful for grandparents.

The right advice will help to avoid unexpected tax consequences and will enable you and your child to focus on other things, such as the study versus socialising balance. If you have a child leaving for university this year and you're considering supporting them financially, get in touch for more support.

Advice on tax related matters could be provided by our tax team and advice on investments is provided by our financial planning specialists.

GRAHAM POLES
TAX PARTNER
- PENRITH

SARAH TALLENTIRE
FINANCIAL PLANNING CONSULTANT
- PENRITH

MEET THE ADVISER – NICK BIRTLE

Here we interview Nick Birtle who has been supporting clients across Cumbria.

Describe a typical working day

I enjoy reading market news and tackling my must-do tasks first thing in the morning. No two days as a financial planner are the same, but here's an example of one of my working days:

In the morning I met with a couple to discuss their potential inheritance, and although that was the focus of the meeting, I also discovered inefficiencies within their own financial arrangements. As can often be the case, the couple's default pension funds were far too cautious for their natural risk profile and investing time horizon, nor were they sufficiently well diversified globally. During this productive meeting, I was able to highlight how they could receive more childcare vouchers, save tax and boost their pension savings in one fell swoop.

After lunch, I responded to emails and calls before meeting a client who was just starting their financial planning journey. Having booked in to see me over fears about not being able to retire, they left with the confidence that they could stop working sooner than expected if they made just a few simple changes to their finances, investment choices and mindset.

What do you enjoy most about providing financial advice?

I absolutely love providing financial advice. It goes way beyond numbers and finances. Money is just a tool, not the driving force of good advice. Connecting with people and putting yourself in their shoes is essential to ensuring clients receive the best possible service.

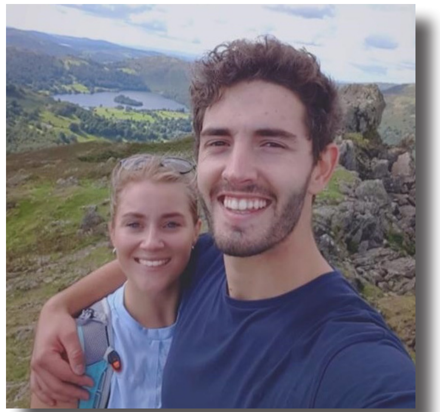
Having previously worked as an accountant in corporate finance with a genuine interest in businesses and investing, a career as a financial adviser was the perfect fit. Financial advisers, rightly or wrongly, suffer reputationally from time to time, usually driven by the occasional public scandal caused by a small number of individuals. Having said that, I strongly believe financial advisers should be providing more value to clients, and I'm here to do just that. I feel lucky to have found a company such as Armstrong Watson that shares these beliefs.

What's the best piece of advice anyone has ever given you?

"The system is the solution." Put the right people, habits and systems in place and enjoy the ride. There's only a certain amount of willpower available to us all. Personally, if there's ice cream in the fridge, it's not surviving the night!

When you're not supporting and advising clients what do you enjoy doing in your spare time?

I'm a huge sports fan and will watch/partake in anything from football to our annual family easter egg hunt (an extreme sport). I spend more time than I care to admit playing, watching and dreaming about golf.



Travel is another passion. I spent my early twenties exploring South East Asia, Australia, New Zealand and the USA with friends. My wife and I spent three months in South America just before the first lockdown. Having been to Machu Picchu in Peru, Chichen Itza in Mexico, the Colosseum in Rome, and Christ the Redeemer in Rio, we plan on completing the rest of the Wonders of the World . That is however being put on hold as we are expecting our first child in August.

You're about to retire on an unlimited budget what's the first thing you'd do?

I'd book a bucket list trip for my family to visit Augusta National and watch the Masters. I'd play the course with my twin brother George (other family members caddying), Rory McIlroy and Tiger Woods. You did say unlimited budget! After that, I'd visit Antarctica to complete my final continent and spend as much time travelling as my wife would allow.

If there was one financial tip you could offer readers what would it be?

Spend less than you earn and invest the difference.

NICK BIRTLE
FINANCIAL PLANNING CONSULTANT - PENRITH

"THANK YOU FOR ENABLING ME TO MAKE A DECISION ABOUT MY HOLIDAY OF A LIFETIME!"

Our client Nuala Taylor was able to book her holiday of a lifetime following a review of her finances and retirement plans.

Having been initially unsure whether she was on track to meet her goal of early retirement, she contacted Armstrong Watson for advice, with the initial objectives of combining pensions and withdrawing tax-free cash.

She worked with Chartered Financial Planner Martyn Pottage, who recommended some simple changes and gave her a clearer picture of what she could afford to do. This gave her the confidence that she could afford her bucket list holiday and she spent four weeks travelling around Asia and Australia as a result.

Nuala had various pensions including four defined benefit (DB) plans (one active and three deferred) and one personal pension from a previous employer. It was clear that she was concerned about her future financial health and being able to plan ahead and continue to be independent

Martyn took time to understand Nuala's objectives and it was agreed her primary objective was to be comfortable in retirement, have a holiday each year and even consider reducing hours before fully retiring. She had a keen interest in pottery making and various crafts and was exploring options of teaching in these areas in the future. This would give her a modest income from the reduction in her income, but allow her more freedom and a gradual transition to full retirement whilst still maintaining her current lifestyle.

Nuala also wanted to understand how she could boost her pension contributions, as she had disposable income every month, to help her achieve her spending plans in retirement.

It was agreed that she did not want to go through the process of reviewing her DB plans as these provided guaranteed income, however, she wanted to understand how they would help meet her income needs along with her personal pension and increased savings from surplus income.

Cashflow Model Report

Cashflow modelling reports help clients understand their current and future income needs and can help to predict their future finances across a range of personal scenarios and assumptions. This can be invaluable as it enables you to see how your current retirement plans will support you in later life but also what you need to do if this falls short. Of course, this isn't a guarantee and is likely to need updating regularly, but what it will do is allow you to more clearly visualise your future financial position over time. It also allows our advisers to demonstrate 'stress tests'. For example, what is the impact on your retirement pot if there was a market crash in year one of your retirement? At what age do your funds run out now?

Martyn used a cashflow modelling report to show Nuala that her core objective of going part-time at 60 was achievable and that she could fully retire no later than age 67 when she will get her State Pension. The model indicated that she could have a strong savings position throughout her life, with a healthy surplus to pass on to her family. Even with stress testing, such as a reduction in investment markets, at years one and three for her defined contribution pension, this appeared to pose little risk to her overall position throughout life. It also confirmed that she can continue to make additional contributions to her retirement planning, further increasing her chances of meeting her objectives.

One of the recommendations Martyn made was for Nuala to restructure her current pension plan and recommend a switch to a new provider which was more cost-effective than her current one, with added flexibility to re-start making contributions.

The overall result was that she received a clearer picture of her retirement plans and with the added bonus that it gave her the confidence that she had enough money to go on her dream holiday.

Martyn said: "I was delighted to see the results of working with Nuala to plan her retirement. It's easy to get lost in the detail and complexity of having collected multiple pensions from different workplaces, however being able to obtain a clearer picture of those, and having good conversations about what life might be like in retirement is what real financial planning is all about."

Nuala found Armstrong Watson through Unbiased, and independent financial adviser search website and she was glad she did. She was so impressed she sent Martyn a thank you note along with a selfie from the top of Sydney Harbour Bridge. "Thank you for helping me sort my pensions out and enabling me to make a decision about my holiday of a lifetime," she said. "I have recommended you to a few friends, so I hope they get in touch!"

If you find yourself in a similar position and would like to have a clearer picture of what you can achieve through retirement planning please get in touch. In addition, if you recommend a new client to Armstrong Watson Financial Planning & Wealth Management, through our Gift It Back scheme, we will donate £50 to a charity of your choice.

MARTYN POTTAGE
REGIONAL FINANCIAL PLANNING MANAGER - EAST YORKSHIRE

THE JOURNEY OF INVESTMENTS – GEOPOLITICS AND ECONOMICS SHAPE THE WAY

The last five years have been incredibly busy with at least one major geopolitical and economic issue consistently demanding attention. To help understand the journey investment markets are travelling, we review where we have been, the challenges faced and what opportunities currently exist.

Important Information

Please note that the contents are based on the author's opinion and are not intended as investment advice.

Any research is for information only, does not constitute financial advice or necessarily reflect the views of the author and is subject to change.

Past performance is not a reliable indicator of future performance. The value of investments and the income derived from them can fall as well as rise and investors may get back less than they invested.

A Turbulent Few Years

In 2018 and 2019, the US/China trade war suppressed returns, while heavy falls linked to the onset of the covid pandemic meant that 2020 was also a lost year for returns. 2021 saw positive growth, with markets benefiting from the easing of covid restrictions. Positivity did not last long, however.

A Rare Occurrence

Lingering covid-induced supply chain issues and Russia's invasion of Ukraine led inflation to soar to levels not seen in 40 years. Investors assumed that higher interest rates would be needed, making recession likely and so equity markets fell in anticipation. Bond markets, which typically outperform in recession, actually fell by more than equities, as the fixed returns they pay fell in relative value as inflation rose. Therefore, 2022 saw losses across both equity and bond markets, a rare occurrence.

Turning Points

Recovery started in mid-October 2022, soon after the destabilising mini-budget, and at the time when markets started to see a route to the peaking of inflation and interest rates. Yet, sentiment once again turned weaker in February 2023. First, US inflation was proving more persistent than previously thought and, second, as problems emerged in the US banking sector.

Banking Crisis

Silicon Valley Bank and Signature Bank collapsed after depositors withdrew funds, having realised the scale of losses these banks made as interest rates rose. With markets in a panic, Credit Suisse was next to go under, having already been in trouble due to a string of scandals and crises. Then, as panic spread from the US, this was the straw that broke the camel's back.

Line in the Sand

With these banks going under, markets fell again. Thankfully, however, a line in the sand was drawn when Deutsche Bank survived a market onslaught, with its balance sheet proving sufficiently strong. Investors subsequently drew the conclusion that the problems in the banking sector were focused in these smaller banks with questionable business models, while the systematically important, large, banks (with the exception of Credit Suisse) were in good health, with many of them actually reporting record profits around this time.

Debt Ceiling

In May sentiment faded once again. This time due to the US debt ceiling. The fear surrounding this event was that should no agreement be reached to raise the amount the US government can borrow, it would be forced to default on its debt, which would have created financial shockwaves globally. Thankfully a deal was struck which averted this outcome, but the uncertainty of the event hampered confidence.

Further Risks

It is clear therefore that recent years have been incredibly challenging and it is also important to consider that the future is not without its risks either, with tension surrounding Taiwan and China an obvious example.

Improving Prospects

Yet, beyond these factors, the global economy looks to be on an improving path. Headline inflation is now past its peak. Core inflation (headline inflation minus volatile factors such as food and energy) is proving persistent, but with the labour market showing some signs of softening, the contribution of higher wages to rising price levels should ease over the next year. Therefore, interest rates likely have a little further to rise, but it seems we are near the top.

Tailwind

Markets fell heavily during 2022 in anticipation of high interest rates, high inflation and likely recession. The first two of these factors are now subsiding or soon will be, while a recession is now less likely. These improving conditions should therefore be supportive for investment markets.

Bond Valuations

If valuation levels are then considered, there are further encouraging signs. Coming into 2022, the returns offered by bonds was incredibly low, as investors were accustomed to negligible interest rates. Yet, after the losses of last year, and the acceptance that the era of low interest rates is behind us, bonds now offer what appears a much more reasonable return. While further losses are still possible here, current valuations suggest such a risk is now much less likely.

Equity Valuations

In equities, valuations in the UK, Europe and Asia are currently below long-term averages and therefore appear to offer an attractive starting point for investment. This is less the case in the US, where prices remain above average.

The Journey Ahead

Recent years have seen challenging conditions for investment markets and with inflation not yet defeated, conditions are likely to remain volatile. Future crises will no doubt emerge, yet given where valuations currently are, and that economic conditions are improving, there are increasing opportunities for long term investors who can tolerate the downs as well as the ups of the investment journey.

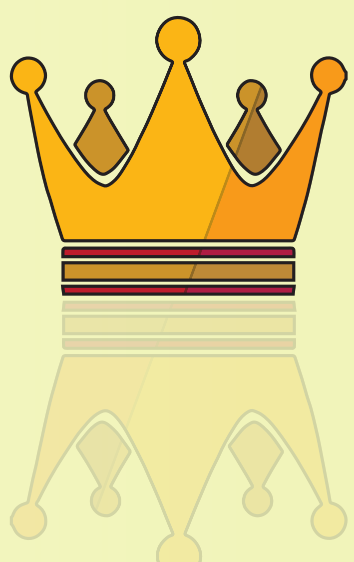
RICHARD COLE
FUND MANAGER – FUTURE MONEY LTD

WHAT TYPE OF PENSION DO YOU HAVE?

There are many different types of pension that you might come across, but the majority typically fall into one of these; Defined Contribution (DC), or Defined Benefit (DB). It's worth understanding the basics of how these work, as it will have an impact on the options available to you, as well as how you plan to access your retirement benefits when you are ready to retire.

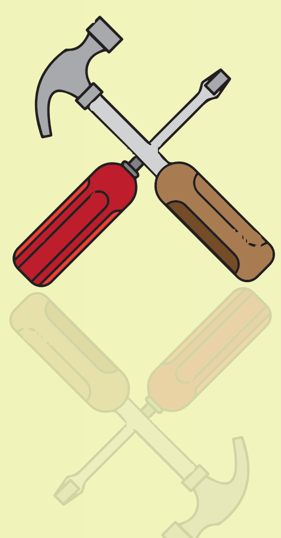
STATE

✔ THE GOVERNMENT



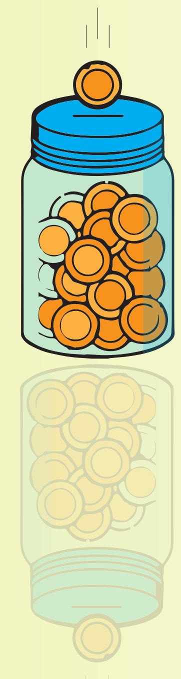
OCCUPATIONAL

✔ EMPLOYEES
✔ EMPLOYERS



PRIVATE

✔ ANY INDIVIDUAL
✔ GOVERNMENT TAX BREAKS



Defined Benefit pension (final salary)

These pensions are becoming increasingly rare, unless you are a government employee, or work in the NHS, fire service, police or armed forces, but they offer valuable benefits for those in the scheme. They are schemes that run through an employer, where you accrue benefits based on your earnings, length of service and membership in the scheme.

They offer a guaranteed income for life, and usually the option of a tax-free cash lump sum. The age at which you can take benefits is set by the scheme and is typically 60 or 65.

Defined Contribution pension (personal/workplace pension)

This pension is based on contributions set up by you, or through your employer. If you are in employment you will have been automatically enrolled into your employers' scheme, unless you opted out, or are under the age of 22, or have earnings of less than £10,000. They work by paying a known amount of money into a pension, typically monthly, by you or possibly your employer, or both.

These contributions are invested into investment funds that will hopefully grow over time, up until your retirement. Your pension contributions will receive tax relief from the Government. The amount of pension capital that you eventually have for retirement will depend on how much you've paid in, how your pension funds have performed, and any charges applied.

There are multiple types of DC pension schemes, one of the most common being a Self-Invested Pension Plan (SIPP), and schemes such as Group Personal Pensions, Executive Pension Plans and Retirement Annuity Contracts.

State Pension

The UK State Pension is the pension that the Government pays most of us when we reach 66, or 67 after 2028. At the moment, it pays:

- £203.85 per week or £10,600.20 per year

To get the full amount, you will need 35 qualifying years of contributions for National Insurance (NI) credits. You can't claim the State Pension if you've paid in for less than ten years.

If you don't have a total of 35 qualifying years, the Government will base your payments on how many years you have paid it for. You get 1/35 of the full amount for every year you've paid in. For example:

- 30 years gives you 30/35 x £203.85, which is £174.72 a week
- 10 years gives you 10/35 x £203.85, which is £58.24 a week

You might be able to top up any NI gaps by paying voluntary contributions and can find out more about the State Pension and check your eligibility on www.gov.uk.

KERRY CHALONER
FINANCIAL PLANNING CONSULTANT - NORTHALLERTON

Achieving what you want

The Retirement Living Standards set out by the Pensions and Lifetime Savings Association suggests that in retirement a couple would need £19,900 per year as a minimum living standard, £34,000 to live moderately and £54,500 to live comfortably.

There are fewer and fewer people who will benefit from generous defined benefit schemes, and more and more of the UK population are having to rely on saving into a personal pension (defined contribution) scheme. As a couple's combined State Pension is just above the minimum lifestyle discussed earlier, saving for the retirement you want is crucial, and the earlier you start, the more chances you have of achieving the lifestyle you want.

To learn more about saving for retirement visit our pension and retirement planning pages, or contact us to discuss how you can achieve the retirement you deserve.

WHAT IS THE 60% HIGH INCOME TAX TRAP?

It is well known that the UK tax system is complicated, at best, with numerous tax pitfalls hidden in plain sight. One of these pitfalls is the 'hidden 60% tax rate'.

If you haven't heard of the 60% tax rate, don't worry, you're not alone!

The 60% tax rate isn't an official rate of Income Tax, and as a result, isn't mentioned in any legislation. It comes from the tapering of the personal allowance when your income goes over £100,000. It affects anyone earning between £100,000 and £125,140, since the Additional Rate tax band changed on 6 April 2023.

Most know the income tax rates over the personal allowance in England for employment and self-employment to be 20%, 40% and 45% with the 45% tax rate starting at £150,000 of income. However, this changed on 6 April 2023 and the 45% tax rate now starts at £125,140.

How will I fall into the 60% income tax trap?

If you earn more than £100,000, your personal allowance of £12,570 is reduced in increments until it reduces to NIL at £125,140. Once it reaches NIL, not only have you lost your tax-free allowance, you will now also be straight into the realms of 45% income tax.

For anyone with income between £100,000 and £125,140, it is this reduction in personal allowance, which saves tax at 20%, combined with the higher rate of 40% tax, which applies to this income, that creates this 60% tax rate.

For example, a higher rate taxpayer earning £100,000 receives a bonus of £10,000. This £10,000 bonus immediately reduces by £4,000, the 40% higher rate tax, leaving £6,000. Then, as the income has breached £100,000, the personal allowance begins to reduce by £1 for every £2 over. The £10,000 bonus now reduces the personal allowance by £5,000 and this reduction pushes income that was taxed at lower rates to be taxed at the higher rate of 40%, being £2,000.

That means that the original £4,000 tax paid, plus the additional £2,000 due because of the personal allowance reduction, gives a total of £6,000 of income tax paid on the £10,000 bonus: an effective rate of 60%.

How can I avoid the 60% tax trap?

The good news is that there are simple, yet effective ways to avoid this pitfall, one of which is by making a personal pension contribution.

If your circumstances dictate, contributing to a pension comes with the benefit that, not only could you save income tax at a rate of 60%, but you are also enhancing your retirement benefits at the same time. Assuming it is suitable to do so, making a contribution of your excess income over £100,000, could help side-skirt the pitfall and avoid some or even all of the 60% tax trap.

With that being said, whether you are a higher-rate taxpayer or an additional-rate taxpayer, pension contributions are a simple and effective way to save income tax at your marginal rate.

BARRY FITZSIMMONS
FINANCIAL PLANNING CONSULTANT
- KENDAL

> **THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT THERE ARE SIMPLE, YET EFFECTIVE WAYS TO AVOID THIS PITFALL, ONE OF WHICH IS BY MAKING A PERSONAL PENSION CONTRIBUTION.**

ARE YOU READY FOR A TRIP OF A LIFETIME?

For many, one of the goals of carefully saving and investing is to enable you to embark upon a longed for trip of a lifetime. Whether you're looking for heritage, adventure or white sand and crystal blue seas, now could be the ideal time to get away.

For the best part of two years holidays were put on hold due to the pandemic and for some 2023 could be the first time to set foot abroad following the lifting of international travel restrictions.

The best of the best will be something different for everyone but one thing that those looking at this list will have in common is a love of travel. Where will you be heading for your trip of a lifetime?

We've selected a handful of inspirational places to visit from the Big 7 Travel website's 2023 list.

1. SLOVENIA

Described as "one of the most scenic countries in the world" need we say more about why Slovenia is worth a visit? Not only is the jaw-dropping beauty of this European gem a major attraction for tourists, but it also has architectural and cultural treasures and is a fantastic place for outdoor pursuits.

2. ANTARCTICA

While this trip of a lifetime to the world's southernmost and remote continent requires some meticulous planning, the experience on offer is utterly overwhelming. If you're looking for adventure this is one place where certain to find it. Visit Emperor penguins, go whale watching, kayak, camp under the stars, hike and even scuba-dive in this ice-capped paradise.

3. SICILY

With more holidaymakers looking for an authentic and affordable experience, this Italian island is often regarded as a glimpse into the past of some regions of the mainland but also offers its own unique cuisine and culture. It boasts beaches, mountains and well-preserved archaeological sites.

4. ZAMBIA

Zambia might be a landlocked country but what its three rivers have to offer make up for the lack of sandy beaches. You can visit the stunning Victoria Falls on the Zambezi River, swim in calm waters and experience a walking safari on dry land, not to mention seeing some of the most diverse birdlife in the world.

5. INDONESIA

With more than 17,000 islands stretching between two oceans, Indonesia – the world's largest archipelago – is a paradise for beach lovers. Bali is the country's hot spot but there's a lot more to be discovered, including untouched beaches, colourful coral reefs and unique wildlife.

6. THE GALAPAGOS ISLANDS

A wish-list place and "one of, if not the best wildlife destinations in the world", according to the Big 7, this group of islands in the Pacific Ocean inspired Charles Darwin's theory of evolution. They are renowned for their giant tortoises, but the wildlife is varied, abundant, and unexpected. Exploring these tropical, volcanic landscapes is an experience not to be missed.

7. JORDAN

This Middle Eastern country tops the Big 7's list of places to visit in 2023. Jordan is among the destinations that have gained interest from those seeking out unique once-in-a-lifetime trips. It's not hard to see why. Home to the ancient city of Petra, one of the world's most famous archaeological sites, and the serene waters of the Dead Sea, culture seekers can also explore Roman ruins and enjoy tantalising local cuisine.

Source: https://bigseventravel.com/23-best-places-to-visit-in-2023/

Dumfries
01387 955900

Carlisle
01228 690000

Penrith
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West Cumbria
01900 310440

Kendal
01539 942030

Settle
01729 320960

Manchester
0161 2590260

Glasgow
0141 233 0130

Newcastle
0191 434 0830

Hexham
01434 375550

Tees Valley/North Yorkshire
01609 702000

Skipton
01756 620000

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