

Essential

FINANCE

Issue 25 | Winter 2024 | Eastwood Financial Services Ltd





Happy New Year to all of our readers!

It seems that New Year's resolutions are becoming a thing of the past but if they are still very much your thing then take a look at our articles on pages 4 and 8 which talk all about reviewing your financial habits and planning for retirement.

To add to your list of 2024 jobs, if you haven't already made a will then take a look at page 12 which explains the reasons why you might want to get onto this.

We also have quite a bit of content this time regarding what we've been up to at EFS.

Page 17 introduces you to our new recruits, Kelly and Jacob, and pages 20 to 23 continue our theme of introducing our team to you. In this edition, you can find out all about Pete, Lynne, Liz and Becky and I am sure their faces will be familiar to you.

Finally, we round off the edition with Tim Ball's very beautiful photos of a journey through the changing seasons of Cromwell Bottom.

Wishing you a happy, healthy and prosperous 2024 from all of us at EFS.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karen".

Karen Wynard
Managing Director

This newsletter is for general information only and is not intended to be advice to any specific person. You are recommended to seek competent professional advice before taking or refraining from taking any action on the basis of the contents of this publication. The Financial Conduct Authority does not regulate tax advice, so it is outside the investment protection rules of the Financial Services and Markets Act and the Financial Services Compensation Scheme. The newsletter represents our understanding of law and HM Revenue & Customs practice.

© Copyright 16th January 2024. All rights reserved.



Contents

04

How expensive are your habits?

If your new year's resolution is to save money in 2024, it might be time to review your regular payments like subscription services – you may be spending a lot more than you think.

06

Autumn Statement outcomes

The Chancellor presented a programme of tax cuts in his Autumn Statement, yet the tax burden continues to increase.

08

New takes on retirement planning

At what age did you (or will you) start actively planning for your retirement?

10

A guaranteed income for life attracts more interest

Increased interest rates are changing retirement income perspectives.

-
- 12 Why wills matter: intestacy rules change delay
 - 13 Footsie at 40 - taking the long view
 - 14 Alternative to deposits
 - 15 Is your protection level still enough?
 - 16 News in brief
 - 17 New additions to our team
 - 18 Our charitable efforts!
 - 19 A nature reserve for all seasons
 - 20 Getting to know the people behind the business

How expensive are your habits?

If your new year's resolution is to save money in 2024, it might be time to review your regular payments like subscription services - you may be spending a lot more than you think.

The cost of many content providers has gone up over the past year, with, for example, popular entertainment services - from Netflix to Spotify to Disney+ - all increasing monthly fees.

It isn't just entertainment platforms looking to lock consumers into regular payment plans. There are now subscription services for podcasts, audio books, online newspapers, wine deliveries, make-your-own meal boxes and pet food supplies - to name but a few. Even high street coffee shops offer 'memberships' with unlimited hot drinks to those paying monthly fees.

Research suggests the average person spends £39 per month on subscriptions, though many will pay significantly more. Collectively, this means UK households spend £1.6bn a month on such services. But not everyone is getting value for money, with one in ten claiming they don't use some services at all.

It's not hard to see how this happens. Providers often offer a free or low-cost introduction - knowing many of us will forget to cancel within the given period. While the cost of any single subscription may look modest, once you're paying for a few, the costs quickly mount.

Lose it if you don't use it

Review how often you do use your subscriptions to calculate the cost of each 'free' cup of coffee or streamed TV show. Generally there's no contract so it's easy to cancel payments for services that are just not working for you. You can always rejoin, should your favourite show return for a further series. In fact, many companies dangle discounts or special offers to get you to return.

If it's a service you use regularly, check whether you can 'downgrade' your payment plan. Streaming services, for example, often have cheaper options with advertisements. Family plans can also be cost effective if more than one person in your household pays for the same service. Don't forget to double check subscriptions that charge annual fees, rather than monthly payments. These can be easily missed, until the next payment disappears from your bank account 12 months later.

Once you've saved money from raking through regular subscriptions, make sure you conduct a more thorough audit of your finances by looking at other regular bills: from gas and electricity contracts to home and car insurance - savings can often be made by switching to better priced deals.

Autumn Statement outcomes – give and take

The Chancellor presented a programme of tax cuts in his Autumn Statement, yet the tax burden continues to increase.

The Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) has the job of analysing the financial impact of the Autumn Statement. The executive summary of the OBR's 170-page 'Economic and Fiscal Outlook' summarised what is happening beneath the headlines:

"...while personal and business tax cuts reduce the tax burden by half a percentage point, it still rises in each of the next five years to a post-war high of 38 per cent of GDP."

While Mr Hunt did indeed make some significant tax cuts, the painful fact is that they are outweighed by earlier tax increases over the last few years.

National insurance

The most eye-catching announcements were cuts made to national insurance contributions (NICs):

- *If you are an employee* under State pension age (currently 66), then from 6 January 2024 the main class 1 contribution rate on earnings from £12,570 to £50,270 reduces from 12% to 10%. Income above £50,270 will remain at the current 2% rate.
- *If you are self-employed* and under State pension age from 6 April 2024:
 - Flat rate class 2 NICs (currently £3.45 a week) will no longer be required. However, if your annual profits are below £6,725 you can continue to make voluntary class 2 contributions to secure contributory benefits, such as the State pension.

- The class 4 contribution rate on profits between £12,570 and £50,270 will be reduced from 9% to 8%. For profits above £50,270 the existing 2% rate remains unchanged.

These changes are worth up to £556 a year if you are self-employed and £754 a year if you are an employee. Their total cost to the Exchequer is about £10 billion a year by 2028/29.

However, the freezes to income tax and NIC allowances and thresholds since 2021/22, and this year's lowered additional (top) rate threshold, mean the Treasury will be *gaining* £27 billion in the coming tax year. By 2028/29 that advantage will exceed £44 billion.

Capital allowances

For companies the major news was that the 100% capital allowance for most investments in new plant and machinery, which was due to disappear after March 2026, will be made permanent, at an initial annual cost of around £10.7 billion.



Wave of change?

As with any 'fiscal event', there was a host of other changes, proposals and consultations in the forest of documentation from HMRC and the Treasury. Among the 110 proposals were:

- Long overdue simplification of the ISA rules from 6 April 2024 and consultation on allowing partial shares to be eligible investments.
- A change to the rules on off-payroll working (IR35) that will avoid the double taxation that can currently arise.
- A raft of papers on various aspects of pensions, the most noteworthy of which was probably a first step towards allowing individuals to have a single pension pot which moves with them from employer to employer.
- More changes to Making Tax Digital (MTD), aimed at simplifying the procedures of this much-delayed reform.
- An overhaul of research and development (R&D) tax reliefs, merging the two existing schemes for accounting periods beginning after 31 March 2024.
- A 9.8% increase in the National Living Wage to £11.44 an hour from April 2024.

For more information on the changes mentioned above or any other aspects of the Autumn Statement, please contact us.

The value of your pension or investment and the income from it can go down as well as up and you may not get back the full amount you invested.

Investing in shares should be regarded as a long-term investment and should fit with your overall attitude to risk and financial circumstances.

The Financial Conduct Authority does not regulate tax advice. Tax treatment varies according to individual circumstances and is subject to change.

New takes on retirement planning

At what age did you (or will you) start actively planning for your retirement?

The answer is now 36 years old according to research undertaken by a major pension provider. That's over three decades before a 36-year-old's current State Pension Age (SPA) of 68 (which could change in the future). For today's retirees, the starting age for planning was on average 49. Over half of that group now wishes that they had begun planning earlier.

The pros of early planning

There are some good arguments why a retirement focus now begins in the mid-30s:

National Statistics data show that the average age of buying a first home and getting married are now both around 34, so for many at 36 life should have gained a settled pattern.

- The research also showed that by age 36, nearly two thirds of respondents were confident in their abilities to make financial decisions.
- Up until 2016, state pension provision for employees had both a flat rate and earnings-related elements. Since 2016 there has only been a flat rate component (currently providing up to £203.85 a week).
- The retirement landscape of the 2050s will look very different from that facing today's retirees who will have been members of final salary pension schemes at some stage in their working lives- or possibly all of it.

Such generous (and costly) employer pension schemes have now largely disappeared from the private sector and, where they remain in the public sector, have often been pared back to career average schemes.

Auto-enrolment benefits

One element common to today's retirees and the 36-year-olds is that for the last 11 years both groups have lived in the world of automatic enrolment (AE) into workplace pensions. By the 2050s, the pensions built up by auto-enrolment will be a much greater

proportion of retirement benefits than they are today.

Apart from the longer timeframe, auto-enrolment will also become more significant because of legislation that was passed in September 2023. This paves the way for the government to:

- Make the 8% minimum contribution level cover all earnings (currently it's up to a maximum of £50,270) and excludes the first £6,240; and
- Reduce the minimum age for automatic enrolment from the current 22 to 18.

Better for longer

You may also have noticed that the new enrolment age of 18 is precisely half of 36. One simple yet significant element of retirement planning is all too frequently ignored: the sooner pension contributions begin, the better. A contribution made at age 18 will enjoy about half a century of investment returns before it starts to be drawn on. One made at 36 is invested for less than two thirds of that timescale.

The truth is that whatever your age, your retirement planning should be a primary focus.

The value of your investment and the income from it can go down as well as up and you may not get back the full amount you invested.

Past performance is not a reliable indicator of future performance.

Investing in shares should be regarded as a long-term investment and should fit with your overall attitude to risk and financial circumstances.

Occupational pension schemes are regulated by The Pensions Regulator.



A guaranteed income for life attracts more interest

Increased interest rates are changing retirement income perspectives.

Three years ago was another era when it comes to interest rates. The Bank of England's bank rate was just 0.1% in December 2020, a fraction of the current 5.25%. In December 2020 you could have bought a government bond maturing in 2035 giving you a gilt-edged annual return of less than 0.4%. Today's 15-year gilt, maturing in 2038, offers around 5%.

Annuities boost

While the change in bank rate has had wide-ranging effects for many and received plenty of media coverage, the move in long-term government bond yields has attracted much less attention. Higher bond yields have pushed up the amount the government pays on its £2,600 billion debt pile, but another effect is that annuity rates have risen significantly across the board.

For example, in December 2020, a typical non-smoking 65-year-old (man or woman) could have secured a 4.8% guaranteed income for life by purchasing an annuity. Wind forward to October

2023 and for the equivalent 65-year-old buying an annuity today the rate is around 7.5% - an increase of over a half. The jump in annuity rates has prompted a surge in annuity sales, with the Association of British Insurers reporting a year-on-year increase of over a third in the first half of 2023. Some buyers may be turning away from the uncertainties of income drawdown after a disappointing 2022 in most investment markets.

Early withdrawal risk

Drawdown has become the main way to take a retirement income since pension flexibility was introduced, but it does involve investment risk, as last year underlined. Some retirees learned the hard way in 2022 of dangers inherent in drawdown known as 'sequencing risk'. When values fall sharply in the early year(s) of regular withdrawals, they leave a rapidly depleted fund that will probably not sustain the same level of withdrawals for the remainder of the investor's life.

Choosing the right option

If you are about to start taking an income from your pension fund or considering a move away from income withdrawals, look carefully at what today's annuity market can offer you. Annuity tables are at best only a very broad guide for a variety of reasons:

- Annuity rates are now close to being individually calculated. Where you live, whether you smoke, how much you drink, any medical conditions you have, and your relationship status are all factors that can determine your personal annuity rate.
- Annuities may be set up as level or increasing, either at a pre-determined rate or in line with inflation. For that typical 65-year-old, full RPI inflation protection cuts the rate to about 4.9%.
- Joint life annuities are an option, meaning that a guaranteed income is paid for both your and your partner's lifetimes.

To learn more about all your annuity choices and the latest rates, get in touch.

The value of your investment and the income from it can go down as well as up and you may not get back the full amount you invested.

Past performance is not a reliable indicator of future performance.

Investing in shares should be regarded as a long-term investment and should fit with your overall attitude to risk and financial circumstances.

Occupational pension schemes are regulated by The Pensions Regulator.



Why wills matter: intestacy rules change delay

The intestacy rules for England and Wales have been changed... belatedly and with real consequences for some estates.

If you do not have a valid will then the decisions about what happens to your estate on your death are governed by the laws of intestacy. These may not work as you might hope or expect them to. The rules differ between England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, but in all three jurisdictions a surviving spouse or civil partner (*not* cohabitee) receives only a specified share of the estate if there are also children or grandchildren.

For England and Wales, that surviving spouse or civil partner's entitlement consists of personal possessions, assets up to a fixed cash value and half of any remaining estate.

The legislation for England and Wales requires that fixed cash value to be updated once total inflation has exceeded 15% since the last update. No such indexation provision applies to the intestacy laws of Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Unfortunately, although the 15% inflation threshold was triggered in November 2022, the Ministry of

Justice did not act until 26 July 2023, by which time the Lord Chancellor's legislated increase raised the cash sum by 19.3% to £322,000.

Throughout the UK, intestacy law is not a subject at the forefront of legislators' minds. But at a personal level, the defaults imposed by intestacy rules can have serious effects. The families of those who died intestate between November 2022 and July 2023 have potentially lost a substantial amount.

Research shows 50% of UK adults do not have a will. If you are among them or your will has not been reviewed for some years, the time to act is now. Procrastination, as the Ministry of Justice showed, can be costly.

The Financial Conduct Authority does not regulate will writing and some forms of estate planning.



Footsie at 40 - taking the long view

On the 3rd January, the FTSE100 - an index of the largest companies listed on the UK stock market - turned 40 years old. What can its history reveal about long-term investing?

The FTSE100 companies, often known as 'blue chips', include many of Britain's best-known brands such as Marks & Spencer, Barclays Bank and Sainsbury's. But they sit alongside several large international corporates, for example Chilean mining conglomerate Anglofagasta, or Anglo-Swedish pharmaceutical giant AstraZeneca. Although the index is rebalanced regularly, just over a quarter of the FTSE100's founding members remain on the list.

Taking the long view

Tracking how this index has evolved over the past 40 years offers some important insights for investors. Any investor who put money into the FTSE100 at outset is sitting on a handsome return on their money. The index is up more than 660% (to the end of September 2023) - giving a compound annual return of 5.2%. This comfortably outperforms inflation (as measured by the retail price index) over the same period.

Of course there have been significant events and corrections during this period - the dotcom peak of 2000 or the global financial crisis in 2008 - when the share prices of these companies plummeted. Such intermittent volatility, however, only underlines why investors need to be able to stay invested for the longer term, riding out these shorter-term price movements.

Since the index launched just three of its companies have gone bust. One lesson investors may take from this is that larger companies can be more stable and less risky than smaller start-ups.

Diversification

However, the performance of the FTSE100 shows

stock markets don't always deliver positive returns, even over longer periods. Prior to the dotcom bubble bursting the FTSE100 peaked at just under 7,000. It took another 16 years to pass the 7,000 barrier. This highlights another key investment lesson: the importance of diversification.

Energy companies, healthcare stocks and banks make up almost 40% of the list. Technology companies - which have delivered some of the strongest returns in recent years - comprise fewer than 1%. What's more, a significant proportion of the index is concentrated in just a few 'super stocks' with Shell's share (at the end of September) accounting for 9% of the total index.

Investors should be looking to diversify where possible, by geography, by sector and by the size of company. Investing across a range of different stock market indices can help achieve that.

Although the FTSE100 delivered returns of around 1% in the first two decades of this century, this is just a reflection of the share price of its constituent companies. Many of the companies listed also pay healthy dividends to shareholders, which are not reflected in the index 'price', but are an important part of total returns, particularly for a mature index like the FTSE100 made up of many long-standing industrial companies.

The value of your investment and the income from it can fall as well as rise and you may not get back the full amount you invested.

Past performance is not a reliable indicator of future performance.

Investing in shares should be regarded as a long-term investment and should fit in with your overall attitude to risk and financial circumstances.

Alternative to deposits

Higher interest rates are good news for savers - although some banks have been slow to raise rates paid on deposit accounts.

One alternative to traditional high-street accounts is money market funds. These funds invest in short-term debt issued by governments, banks and companies with high credit ratings and typically pay investors a monthly return.

These are relatively low-risk funds, certainly compared with equities and longer-term bonds, but this doesn't mean they are entirely risk free. Interest rate movements can affect the value of the underlying holdings and payments made to investors. There is also the risk an issuer could go bust, defaulting on payments, although the spread of securities minimises this to some extent.

Money market funds allow instant access and are often used by investors as a temporary safe haven when stock markets look turbulent. Returns vary, depending on the underlying investments, but many funds are currently yielding around 5%. Like all investment funds, though, there will be management fees to pay.

It's important to note that these funds are not covered by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme which protects deposits up to £85,000 in the event of a bank or building society going under.

The value of your investment and any income from it can go down as well as up and you may not get back the full amount you invested.

Past performance is not a reliable indicator of future performance.

Investments do not offer the same level of capital security as deposit accounts.





Is your protection level still enough?

Income protection insurance can ensure essential bills will be paid if you are unable to work due to ill health. But with the cost of living rising significantly over the last 18 months, it is worth checking any policy you have in place will still cover mortgage or rent, food and energy costs.

Income protection covers a fixed proportion of your salary and typically only pays out after you have been signed off sick from work for a number of weeks. The longer this deferral period the lower the starting premium.

If you've insured 50% of your salary, for example, it is worth checking this is sufficient to cover essential bills given the rise in energy costs and interest rates.

If not, you might want to increase the benefit on the policy, although this will result in higher monthly premiums. Alternatively look to build more substantial rainy day savings, which could be used to cover any shortfalls in an emergency.

News in brief

Last tax return

Self-employed and high-earning individuals must file their tax returns and settle outstanding taxes by 31 January, with penalties for late submissions. But this will be the last year some higher earners go through this process. Currently those taxed through PAYE must complete a self-assessment form if they earn over £100,000. This is rising to £150,000 for the next tax year. However this doesn't apply to the self-employed, those with untaxed income, or those receiving child benefit if their partner earns over £50,000.

Royal change

The coins in your wallet will soon look a little different. After the coronation of King Charles III last year, the Royal Mint is releasing its first full set of redesigned coins, which will gradually replace those currently in circulation. The coins feature animals and plants from around the UK, including the red squirrel, oak tree and Atlantic salmon. Royal Mint's new design includes large numbering to make them more accessible, particularly to tourists and children.

Working longer

More than one in 10 over 65s are now working past their 65th birthday – double the number seen 20 years ago according to ONS figures. Many of these workers are self-employed or working part time, with a relatively high proportion on zero hours contracts. The only age group with a higher proportion on these insecure work contracts are the 16–24-year-olds. Many are choosing to work for longer as they remain in good health, but insufficient pension savings is also thought to be playing a part.

New additions to our team

We're pleased to announce that we have two new colleagues at Eastwood Financial Services.

Kelly Noakes joins us as an Independent Financial Adviser. Kelly has had an extensive career working within Financial Services in a number of roles and increases our Adviser Team to eight. Kelly will work within our Private Client Team advising both existing and new clients to the firm.

As mentioned in our summer issue, we continue to champion employing local people within our firm and offering apprenticeships. In the summer of 2022, Jacob Brown joined us on work experience from Huddersfield New College where he was studying for A-Levels. We were so impressed with Jacob during his work experience that we offered him a role as a Private Client Administrator after completion of his A-Levels and the opportunity to undertake an Apprenticeship in Financial Services. Jacob has now commenced his apprenticeship which will lead to industry recognised qualifications.

I am sure you will join us in welcoming Kelly and Jacob to Eastwood Financial Services for what will hopefully be a long and fruitful career for them both.



Our charitable efforts!

As you will know, Eastwood Financial Services work very hard to support local charities and we've been busy over the last few months.

Yorkshire Air Ambulance is a dedicated helicopter emergency air ambulance for the Yorkshire and the Humber region of England. It was established in October 2000, and currently operates two Airbus H145 aircraft. It is an independent charity that relies solely on the donations of individuals and organisations.

Earlier this year, Eastwood Financial Services were delighted to take a table at the St Leger Festival at Doncaster Race Course in aid of the Yorkshire Air Ambulance and had a fabulous day out in the sunshine.

Through various donations and raffles on the day, Yorkshire Air Ambulance were able to raise just over £20,000 and we at Eastwood Financial Services are proud to have been able to contribute and help this wonderful local charity.

KACCL, Kirklees and Calderdale Charity Lunch is an annual event, held to help raise funds for local charities and organisations who specialise in helping young people. We were pleased to take a couple of tables at the event to show our support and help contribute towards raising an amazing £30,000 on the day.

Christmas Jumper Day is **Save the Children's** annual event which raises money for the children who need it most.

Every December, millions of people across the United Kingdom (and beyond!) put on festive knitwear at their workplace, school or with friends and make a donation to help give children the magical future they deserve and help kids facing serious issues like war, hunger and poverty.

Eastwood Financial Services held their 'Christmas Jumper Day' on Friday 8th December, which was also the office Christmas Party, and so helped us all get in the spirit. We were pleased to raise a total of £117.50 through staff donations and an office raffle for a bottle of wine.

The Rotary Clubs in Calderdale have for the last 11 years, run a very successful community spirited **Rotary Christmas Shoebox Appeal**.

In 2022 Rotary distributed over 1,700 presents in the run up to Christmas to 21 local charities and good causes. The presents had been hand packed into shoeboxes with fillings suitable for new born babies through to teenagers and toiletries for men and women.



Across the entire Eastwood group of companies, staff have managed to fill 40 shoeboxes to go to local people for Christmas.

We are looking forward to continuing our charitable efforts into 2024 and beyond!

A nature reserve for all seasons

Our resident nature photographer, Tim Ball has been working on a series of photos throughout the last year at one of his favourite wildlife nature reserves in Calderdale - Cromwell Bottom.

Cromwell Bottom is situated next to the Calder & Hebble Navigation between Halifax and Brighouse and the river Calder runs through the reserve. The wetlands and meadows provide the perfect habitat for a large variety of birds, mammals and insects including butterflies, moths and dragonflies.

Tim's photos have been taken from the exact same spot on the bridge overlooking the river Calder at the entrance to Cromwell Bottom.

Spring



Summer



Autumn



Winter



Getting to know the people behind the business

In previous editions, we have introduced you to our directors, adviser team and more recently our team leaders. In the next few editions, we will introduce you to our hard working internal team who beaver away behind the scenes! We are very proud of our colleagues who all work collectively to make it all come together and it's a delight to help you learn more about the people behind our business.



LIZ ALLERTON

PA to the Managing Director

What is a typical day for you?

Generally, I like to have an early start to the day... whether it be a workday or a weekend!

Once at work, I like to get myself organised and prepared for the challenges of the day ahead. As a member of the Corporate Services team, my typical working day usually consists of dealing with a wide variety of admin duties for our corporate clients. I also work alongside Karen as her PA which keeps me very busy!

How do you spend your weekend?

My Saturday morning usually starts with an early trip to the supermarket leaving me with plenty free time for the rest of the day to catch up with things I can't get round to doing during the week. My daughter and I enjoy shopping and sometimes take a trip to a shopping centre for a spot of retail therapy on a Saturday afternoon! If not out spending money, my husband and I enjoy taking my daughter's Cocker Spaniel, Whiskey, for a long walk be it locally or a bit further afield.

Sundays are spent more leisurely visiting family and catching up with my grandchildren.

Are you more of a bookworm or a film buff?

Neither really... I prefer to watch a good drama or documentary on television rather than watch a film. I have to confess I am also a bit of a "soap" fanatic too! I would rather flick through different articles in a magazine than read a book. However, I do like to find time to test my knowledge with brain teasers in a good puzzle book!

Can you describe your perfect holiday?

My ideal holiday would be spent relaxing somewhere nice and hot, soaking up the sun and enjoying the local culture and cuisine on any one of the Greek islands... my favourite being Kefalonia. However, having said, that my husband and I spent some time in Northumberland recently and thoroughly enjoyed exploring the beautiful coastline.

What are your hopes for the year ahead?

As we go into a new year, I would like to see the world become a much more settled place with less doom and gloom. I wish my family good health and happiness and success in all that they do.



LYNNE APLEYARD
Office Administrator

What is a typical day for you?

I get up at 6am for my daily walk - as I like to be top of the leader board for our company's activity APP! I call at my mum's on my way to work to check she's OK and a quick catch up and then it's in to the office for the housekeeping tasks - emptying the dishwasher, preparing the meeting rooms ready for clients, watering the plants, etc.

My tasks generally include greeting clients and visitors and then in and amongst opening the post, scanning documents and data cleansing.

How do you spend your weekend?

Saturdays start with pilates at 8.45 and then we are usually out for lunch and possibly coffee and cake in the afternoon, gardening in the summer or when the weather is suitable. We try and fit a walk in to balance the cake! Sundays are taken up with household chores, visiting and taking our mums out, generally to a garden centre and that's weekend gone!

Are you more of a bookworm or a film buff?

I am a true bookworm - but only "chick lit", my favourite authors being Cathy Bramley, Danielle Steele, Debbie Macomber but for a bit of excitement - Nora Roberts. Either stories about Cornwall and beach living or Christmas love stories. I prefer an actual book but will take my Kindle on holiday - only so that I can pack more clothes and shoes.

Can you describe your perfect holiday?

My perfect holiday is somewhere hot and preferably with all my children and their partners coming with us! However this doesn't tend to happen much these days unless we're paying. Otherwise it's just me and my husband, usually not a long flight or transfer and then just relaxing for a couple of weeks by the pool - with some walking involved to counteract the food and drink. We've just been to Egypt and done a Nile cruise to celebrate a friend's 60th - whilst we enjoyed it and are glad we went, we wouldn't go again.

What are your hopes for the year ahead?

It's a bit of a cliché but I really hope the wars in Palestine and Ukraine end. On a more personal level we've rebooked to go to Cape Verde as we had to cancel last year and really can't wait to go. I'm hoping it's going to become a favourite.



PETER ASHTON
Paraplanner

What is a typical day for you?

As a Paraplanner, the main body of my day is taken up doing research for financial reports, as well as actually writing them! I am also on the apprenticeship scheme here at Eastwoods, so I also spend time observing adviser meetings, attending webinars and studying for my next exam, usually accompanied with a cup of tea.

After work I can usually be found in the gym or training for whichever sport I'm getting ready to play on Saturday.

How do you spend your weekend?

I usually spend my Saturday afternoons playing sport depending on the seasons, Cricket in summer and Rugby Union in winter, and maybe some golf on a weekend off! I also enjoy going out for food with my friends and family, and supporting my beloved Sale Sharks.

Are you more of a bookworm or a film buff?

I do enjoy a good history book, especially regarding things pre-medieval, but I much prefer catching an episode or two of a box set to wind down in the evening.

Can you describe your perfect holiday?

I get bored on the beach quite easily, so I much prefer a city break in Europe exploring a city I've not been to before, Barcelona and Rome being two of my personal favourites.

What are your hopes for the year ahead?

On a personal note I'm hoping to pass more exams as I work towards becoming a financial adviser, but on a wider scale I'd like to see some greater stability in the financial markets, as well as a more concerted effort to tackle the looming climate issues.



BECKY BROOKE
General Administrator

What is a typical day for you?

First thing I do is get my 3 year old ready and dropped off at nursery, then I get ready for the working day. When I arrive at the office I log on and find out what my jobs are for the day. My role is split between Corporate Services and Private Client work, so it changes on a daily basis.

I also help with data cleansing the system to ensure we are as up to date as possible.

How do you spend your weekend?

My weekends are always busy with my daughter and my family, keeping a 3 year old entertained and finding lots of interesting activities to do.

We like going to the Eureka museum as there are lots of things to look at and get involved in. Some weekends we spend shopping and having time with my daughter's friends, again keeping her occupied.

Are you more of a bookworm or a film buff?

I definitely prefer a good film rather than a book, however, depending on the story I can get lost in a book now and again. I haven't been to the cinema in a long time but watching films in the comfort of your own home is the best sometimes.

Can you describe your perfect holiday?

In 2019 I was lucky enough to spend a holiday in Cuba. I had never been before and had heard lots of stories on how dangerous it can be, however, I have never been to such a lovely friendly place.

The culture and people were fantastic, we got to ride in an old American car and visit a farm out in the sticks. They were so welcoming as this was their home and they showed us all the different fruits and vegetables they were growing.

When my daughter is older I would love to go back and show her all the amazing things we saw and did.

What are your hopes for the year ahead?

My daughter starts school in September so I am hoping we get the choice of school we have asked for as all her friends will also be applying for the same school.

I also hope the New Year brings lots of different opportunities and my friends and family are all well.



Giving you financial freedom

Eastwood Financial Services is committed to offering independent, careful and comprehensive financial planning to both businesses and private clients.

www.eastwoodfinancial.co.uk

Pennine House, Lowfields Close, Lowfields Business Park, Elland HX5 9DA

Tel 01422 377 737 Fax 01422 376 866 www.eastwoodfinancial.co.uk

Eastwood Financial Services is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority