

# Essential

## FINANCE

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Hello to all of our readers

We hope this edition finds you well and enjoying the delights of the cosy season ... our front cover photo provides a lovely reminder of the beautiful colours at this time of year.

As I write this, we have the Autumn Statement hanging over us and our article on pages 6 and 7 gives a concise summary of some of the ongoing speculation. Some of you may wonder why we are publishing Essential Finance now, would it not be better to wait until after the Autumn Statement? Well like any publication, Essential Finance works to a 'strict-ish' timetable and so we decided it would be best to go ahead in line with this. However, depending on what arises on the 30 October 2024, then we will communicate separately if any of the changes warrant this.

So despite the speculation and the uncertainty ahead, we've still managed to put together a very interesting and diverse edition for you. Those of you who work with us from a business/employer point of view will find our article on page 4 of interest – it covers the planned changes to automatic enrolment pension contributions and calculations. And when I say 'planned', this is because we still don't have a confirmed date yet, as explored by the article.

Other articles range from the recent cut in interest rates, the increase in top rate taxpayers right through to dividends and student loans! As I said, a very diverse edition this quarter and as always, should you wish to discuss any of the issues raised then do contact us.

Finally, and as always, we've taken the time to tell you all about what we've been up to at EFS... we introduce you to some more of our staff, including Michelle who we have recently welcomed on board, and there's also a short write up on our Macmillan Coffee Morning accompanied by some lovely photos of the team and the treats!

Over £230 was raised by the coffee morning – we are all very proud and are now looking towards our next challenge. Our local hospice, Overgate, have recently dropped off some leaflets on challenges that they are running next year and there's definitely some interest in the office – the Jurassic Coast, Ben Nevis or even Everest Base Camp?! Watch this space...

Until next time, sending best wishes from all of us at EFS,

**Karen Wynard**  
Managing Director

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# The missing element in pensions change

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Promised adjustments to pension law are missing a key element: increasing minimum contribution levels.

The first King's Speech of the new parliament in July contained proposals for 40 new bills, covering everything from football governance to cyber security. One familiar item on the list was a Pension Schemes Bill. The government's briefing notes explained that this Bill would largely deal with administrative matters, such as automatic consolidation of pension pots on employment changes. There was one obvious omission, however, that could do more to improve retirement prospects than any of the Bill's draft contents: increasing the minimum level of contributions under automatic enrolment.

At present, for an employee aged between 22 and State Pension Age and earning at least £10,000 a year, the minimum contribution is set at 8% (3% employer minimum/balance paid by employee) of annual earnings between £6,240 and £50,270 – an effective maximum of £3,522 a year. The earnings range has been unchanged since 2021/22 and the percentage rate fixed since 2019/20.

## Inadequate contributions

There is widespread agreement among pension experts that current contributions are too low to provide an adequate retirement income alongside the State pension. The last government accepted this and introduced legislation giving it powers to reduce both the minimum age and lower level of qualifying earnings. However, the law has spent nearly a year on the statute book, unused.

Australia's version of automatic enrolment has a contribution rate that will rise to 12% of earnings next year, all paid by the employer. The *Financial Times* recently reported that a group of "eight financial services veterans" had sent a letter to Rachel Reeves recommending that the minimum percentage rate should increase by 1% a year until it reaches 15%.

The Chancellor, like her predecessor, is in a bind on contribution increases. Someone will have to pay, which means annoying employers and/or employees when the impact of recent high inflation is still being felt. Raising contributions also hits the Exchequer's coffers because of tax relief given to contributors.

Just because the government chooses masterly inaction, you do not have to. If you want a comfortable retirement, talk to us now about how much more *you* could be putting in your pension.

*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.*

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

*Occupational pension schemes are regulated by The Pensions Regulator.*



# A pre-Halloween scare? Looking ahead to the autumn Budget

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Rachel Reeves's first Budget will be on Wednesday 30 October.

"I have to tell the House [the] Budget will involve taking difficult decisions to meet our fiscal rules across spending, welfare and tax."

The Chancellor's 'Public Spending: Inheritance' speech to parliament at the end of July was designed to prepare taxpayers for changes to come. To make sure the message was clear, she also revealed "A £22bn hole in the public finances now – not in the future."

The new Chancellor took immediate action to start filling the hole, including cancellation of road and rail projects and ordering departments to stop all non-essential spending on consultants. There were also two notable expenditure-saving measures:

- An immediate end to Winter Fuel Payments in England and Wales, other than for pensioners receiving certain means-tested benefits. (Scotland subsequently followed suit.)
- The abandonment of the scheme to cap care home fees in England, previously due to start in October 2025.

The next stage of strengthening the government's finances will be unveiled in the Budget on 30 October. Even before Ms Reeves had discovered the £22 billion hole, think tanks such as the Institute for Fiscal Studies had forecast the first post-election Budget would see taxes rise (as they normally do).

## The not so usual suspects?

So where might the Chancellor look for some much-needed cash? Her party's manifesto said, "Labour will not increase taxes on working people, which is why we will not increase National Insurance, the basic, higher, or additional rates of Income Tax, or VAT." However, as the previous government demonstrated, a 'rates' pledge leaves scope for creativity elsewhere, such as freezing or even reducing thresholds. In her July statement, the relevance of the manifesto's reference to 'working people' was made clear by the surprising welfare cuts that primarily hit pensioners.

At present Reeves's most likely targets appear to be:

**Capital gains tax (CGT)** The Labour manifesto made no mention of CGT. Several think tanks and the now defunct Office of Tax Simplification have floated the idea of bringing CGT rates in line with income tax, meaning that the maximum rate in most circumstances would rise from 20% (24% for residential property) to 45%.

**Inheritance tax (IHT)** There are some obvious targets to add to Treasury receipts in this area. Business and Agricultural reliefs mean that the average effective tax rate on the largest estates is lower than that on more modest estates. Scrapping those reliefs, or capping their value, would affect only a few estates, but could produce meaningful extra revenue.



Another exemption that could disappear – and affect many more people – is the current general exclusion of pension pots from IHT calculations.

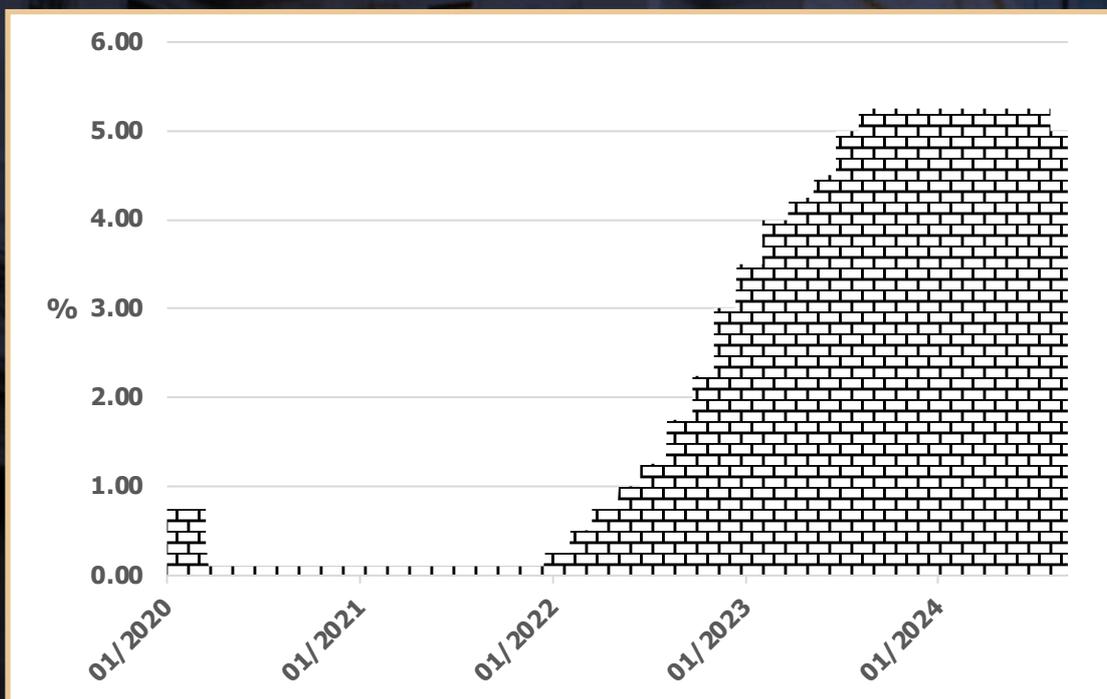
***Tax relief on pension contributions*** Right now pension contributions attract income tax relief (within limits) at your marginal rate(s) of tax. That can be as high as 60% (67.5% in Scotland) in the income band where the personal allowance is tapered. Replacing the marginal rate relief with a flat rate relief is a commonly suggested reform. If Reeves were to choose a 30% flat rate, most taxpayers would be better off, and the Exchequer would gain an estimated £3 billion a year.

If you think any of these potential changes could affect you or you are considering other areas of tax planning, do seek advice as soon as possible. In some circumstances pre-Budget action may be advisable, but in others (such as pension contributions if you are a basic rate taxpayer), procrastination could be the wisest option.

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# Interest rates take a step down

As the Bank of England cut interest rates for the first time in over four years, what are the implications for your investments?



Source: Bank of England

The Bank of England did something this summer unseen since 19 March 2020: it cut the Bank rate. The decision was a close call for the Bank's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC): five voted for the reduction while four favoured holding rates unchanged. However, that division reflected more a question of timing on the change rather than its direction.

After nearly a year with the Bank rate stuck at 5.25%, investors are now pondering two new questions: how fast will rates fall and how far? Unlike its counterpart in the United States, the Bank of England does not offer its own opinions on future rates. Instead, the Bank prefers to produce its economic outlook using the future interest rates implied by the UK money markets. These currently suggest that the Bank rate will be 4.2% in the third

quarter of 2025, 3.8% a year later and 3.5% by the third quarter of 2027. Such numbers come with a health warning: unanticipated events can wreck the most carefully calibrated forecasts – as recent years have demonstrated.

Nevertheless, assuming no global pandemics, further wars or other international incidents, UK interest rates look set on a downward path, although a return to the near-zero rates of the 2010s is not on the radar according to those money market projections. Those rates were a prolonged response to the 2008 global financial crisis (followed by Covid-19) and are already beginning to appear an historic aberration.

## Impact of falling rates

The expected steady decline in interest rates has several consequences for investors, including:

- New investors will see the return on fixed interest securities such as government bonds fall. This move is already underway, as investors buy to lock in current returns. For example, the benchmark 10-year government bond was yielding over 4.5% in October 2023, whereas by mid-August 2024 its yield was under 4%.
- Falling long-term bond yields go alongside a drop in annuity rates. If you are thinking about fixing all or part of your retirement income, delay could prove costly.
- Returns on cash deposits will drop as the Bank rate falls. So far in 2024 it has been easy to find cash returns above the rate of inflation, discouraging investors from leaving the investment sidelines. Inertia is now a serious risk if you are sitting with cash. Wait too long before making your move into long-term assets and you could miss investment profits.
- Lower interest rates benefit companies, particularly smaller companies which tend to have higher borrowing. In the US, which is at a similar stage in the interest rate cycle, there have been signs that investors are switching their attention from the mega companies towards smaller companies.

For advice on how you should approach an investment landscape of falling interest rates, talk to us soon – the longer you defer, the lower rates could drop.

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

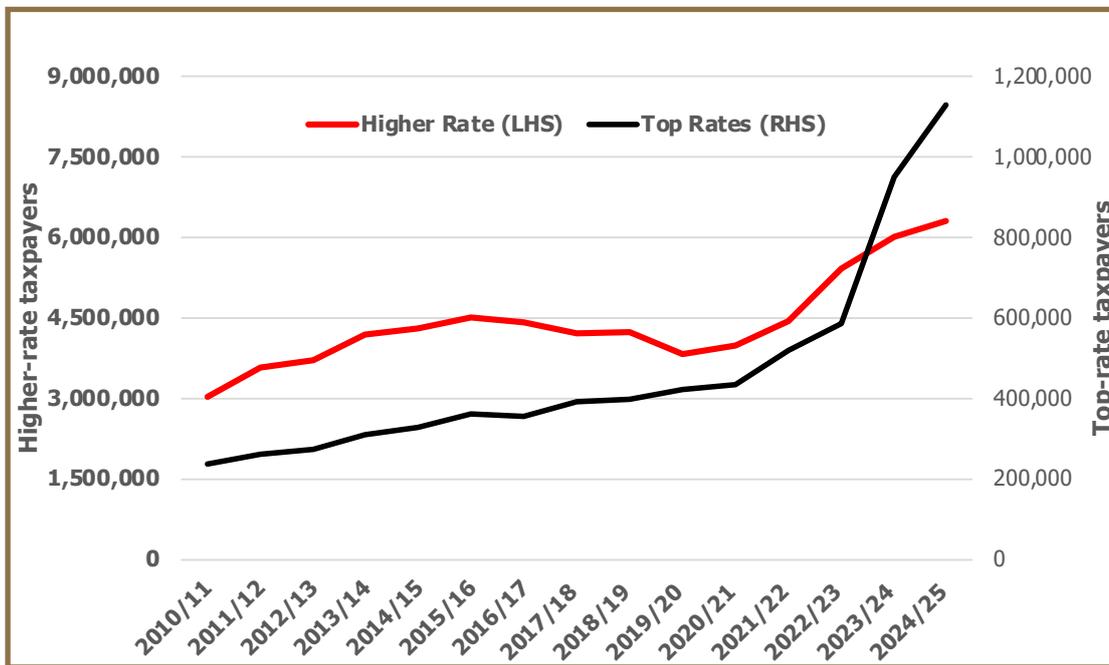
*The value of your investment and any income from it can go down as well as up and you may not get back the full amount you invested.*

*Past performance is not a reliable indicator of future performance.*

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

# Joining the boom in top-rate taxpayers?

New data from HMRC show there are now more than a million people paying income tax at a rate of at least 45%.



Source: HMRC

Each year HMRC produces an extensive set of tables about income tax, the source of about 30% of all revenue flowing into the Exchequer. The stats that caught media attention show how many taxpayers are paying more than basic rate (see graph above).

Scotland complicated these tables several years ago by creating 19% and 21% rates alongside the 20% basic rate. In the current tax year, a further complication has been thrown into HMRC's spreadsheets by the introduction of another Scottish tax rate, the 45% advanced rate. This applies to taxable income (excluding dividend and savings income) between £62,430 and £125,140, the starting point for Scotland's top rate (increased to 48% for 2024/25). The rest of the UK applies additional rate

tax (at 45%) from the same upper level.

Faced with multiplying tax bands, HMRC decided that it would class anyone in the UK paying tax at 45% or more as an additional-rate taxpayer. This pragmatic approach had two consequences just about detectable on the graph above:

- The number of Scottish higher-rate (42%, not 40%) taxpayers fell 11% because some became advanced-rate payers.
- Scottish additional-rate taxpayers increased by 253%.



## Hike in numbers

The Scottish distortions were not sufficient to alter two clear trends in the graph: a sharp rise since the start of this decade in the number of UK taxpayers who pay higher rate or additional rate (as HMRC defined) tax. The boom in the higher-rate taxpayer population is a direct result of the freeze in the higher rate threshold at the 2021/22 level (throughout the UK), despite the 20%+ surge in inflation since April 2021.

The additional-rate tax story is worse because a £150,000 threshold freeze from 2010/11 was followed by a cut to £125,140 in 2023/24 (and the Scottish 'advanced' manoeuvre in the following tax year).

The higher-rate threshold freeze is currently due to end in April 2028, although it is possible that October's Budget will extend the date – as previous Chancellors have found, threshold freezes are a useful stealth tax increase. The additional rate threshold is fixed, with no prospect of change until a Chancellor decides to act. Suffice to say, such generosity to those with the highest incomes is not top of anyone's political agenda.

At the time of the last Budget, the Office for Budget Responsibility estimated that by 2028/29 nearly one in five income taxpayers would be paying higher rate and more than one in thirty would be subject to additional rate.

If you find yourself in, or heading to, higher- or additional-rate tax, it is unlikely any Budget in the next few years will come to your assistance. If the proportion of your income lost to tax in the future reduces, it is much more likely to be the result of careful personal tax planning than any Chancellor's largesse. To find out more about the range of those planning options and the tax savings you could make, please get in touch.

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# Dividends deliver - behind the headlines

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UK companies paid their investors bumper dividends of £36.7bn in the second quarter of 2024 - an 11.2% year-on-year rise. Take a closer look behind the positive headline, however, and there are some important caveats.

Rising dividend payments can reflect economic growth and improved corporate profitability, so should be good news for investors. But analysis of the figures suggests investors should be cautious, as they include a significant jump in 'special' one-off dividends, made in exceptional circumstances.

In Q2, there were £4.1bn special dividends - including a whopping £3.1bn payment from HSBC following the sale of its Canadian subsidiary. Excluding these payments, regular dividends were up by just 1%.

Dividends aren't just for income-seeking investors; they can, if reinvested, significantly boost overall returns. Over the last 20 years the FTSE 100 index has returned 65% to investors (or 2.6% a year.) But if this also includes reinvested dividends, total return is 239%, or 6.6% a year.

However not all companies pay regular dividends. These payments tend to be made by more mature, financially stable companies, or firms that can generate consistent cash flow. This might include utility companies, banks and oil and gas companies.

In contrast, less well-established companies, or those operating in rapidly evolving sectors, tend not to pay dividends. These firms may choose to reinvest profits into the business to drive further growth, rather than returning money to shareholders via a dividend.

In the UK almost 90% of the dividends paid are made by the largest listed companies that make up the FTSE 100, with banks making the strongest contribution to dividend growth during Q2. There was also strong growth in dividends from healthcare companies.

However, the figures also highlight where economic growth has stalled in recent years, with a significant drop in dividends paid by mining companies, and a fall in payouts from housebuilders.

In fact, if the relatively 'weak' mining sector is excluded from this year and last year's figures, dividend growth across the rest of UK market stood at 8.6% - indicating that investors can still find income opportunities in the UK market, despite sector specific slowdowns.

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# The truth about student loans

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Freshers starting university this autumn face higher costs for their education due to changes in student loan repayment rules in England. (Different rules apply in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.)

Changes took effect last year, so don't impact students who began degrees before September 2023. However, new students will experience significant differences in how they repay their loans compared to those who have just graduated.

The average student debt in England is £45,600, with some students owing £60,000, which covers both tuition fees (£9,250 a year except in Scotland) and means-tested maintenance loans. However, student debt is unlike conventional loans because repayments are a fixed percentage of earnings, not tied to the total debt.

For instance, a graduate earning £30,000 annually will pay the same amount each month regardless of whether they have a student loan of £5,000 or £50,000. Unlike conventional loans, unpaid debts are written off after a set period.

The revised system has graduates repaying their loans once their earnings exceed £25,000, down from the previous threshold of £27,295. This means that a graduate earning £30,000 will now repay £450 annually, compared to £243.45 under the old system. Additionally, the repayment period has been extended from 30 to 40 years, meaning some graduates could be repaying their loans into their 60s.

Higher earners are more likely to repay their debt within the original 30-year term, leaving those on lower and moderate incomes continuing to pay back for longer.

However, the government has revised how interest is calculated on these loans, capping the maximum interest rate at the Retail Price Index (RPI), a reduction from the previous cap of RPI plus three percentage points.

Regardless of the changes, focusing on paying down these debts doesn't usually pay off, as it won't reduce monthly repayment or necessarily ensure faster repayment. Graduates, parents or grandparents are generally advised to focus financial help elsewhere. Even under the new terms, it is still estimated that 48% of graduates won't pay off their debt within the 40-year period, with the loans eventually written off.



A photograph of a field of wind turbines at sunset. The sky is a vibrant orange and red, with the sun low on the horizon. The turbines are silhouetted against the bright sky. The foreground is a field of tall grasses.

# Ensuring green means green

Many of us are taking steps to tackle some of the big environmental challenges we face. This might be switching to an energy tariff that utilises solar and wind power, reducing plastic use or ensuring our money is invested sustainably.

There is now a wide range of 'green' investment products and funds, designed to appeal to the eight out of ten adults who say they would like to see their investments 'do some good' as well as deliver a financial return.

Until now, it has been difficult for ordinary investors to see whether the underlying investment strategy matches environmental claims, leading to industry concerns around 'greenwashing' - a term used to describe misleading advertising or marketing.

## Accurate marketing

The Financial Conduct Authority introduced a new anti-greenwashing rule from 31 May 2024 to tackle this problem. This sets out new product labels and standardised definitions to help investors better understand how their money is being invested, aiding consumer choice.

Financial companies also now need to evidence relevant marketing claims, whether they relate to green credentials, sustainability or having a positive impact on the environment or wider society. This should enable regulators to act against firms who say one thing but do another when it comes to environmental and sustainability claims on funds.

## Gaining trust

As a result, there may be fewer 'green' investment products on the market, but investors should have confidence that those remaining are proven sustainable investment options, that do what they say on the tin.

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

# October tax deadlines approach

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There are two other important tax dates in October, besides the Budget.

The final date for filing your 2023/24 tax return is 31 October 2024 if you do not want to file online (which has a 31 January 2025 deadline). These days, HMRC discourages paper tax returns and will only issue them on request. For 2022/23, over 97% of returns due were filed online.

## New reporting

As the relevance of 31 October has faded, another October tax date has become more important – 5 October. This is the deadline for telling HMRC if you need to file a tax return and

have not been sent one before. For example, a return would be required if you started self-employment in 2023/24 with income exceeding £1,000 or realised capital gains above the annual exempt amount (£6,000 in 2023/24). HMRC has an online tool that allows you to check whether you need a return: <https://www.gov.uk/check-if-you-need-tax-return>

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# New addition to our team

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We're pleased to inform you we have a new addition to the team at Eastwood Financial Services.



Michelle Worthington joins us as a Paraplanner, completing Advisory Reports for our clients.

Michelle brings a wealth of experience having commenced her career in Financial Services in 1995 and has held various Technical and Managerial Roles since then. Michelle has been particularly involved in the Pension arena working on both Personal and Employer Pension Schemes.

# News round up

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## VAT on school fees from January

Parents educating their children in the independent sector can expect a sharp rise in school fees from 1 January 2025, when the government will start imposing VAT at 20% on these fees. Parents can't avoid the increase by paying the full year's fees early, as VAT will be applied to all payments for the January term made from the end of July this year.

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## NS&I certificates

Lower inflation has made NS&I's popular Index-linked Savings Certificates less attractive. Holders should weigh up options at maturity, rather than letting them roll-over into a new term. Around 300,000 people hold these tax-free accounts, which pay an inflation-linked return for two, three or five years. Returns have been high in recent years, but with inflation expected to linger around the 2% mark there are now better paying accounts elsewhere.



## Sterling's high

Sterling has been one of the best-performing currencies in 2024. But a strong pound does not always help investors holding overseas funds and assets. This is particularly true for Japan investors, with the Yen down against the pound by about 7% this year, negating some of the gains seen in the Japanese stock market for UK investors.

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# Macmillan Coffee Morning

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On Thursday the 26th of September, the team at Eastwood Financial Services, led by our Trainee Employee Benefits Consultant, Daniella Powell bustled together for our Macmillan Coffee morning.

There were a myriad of baked goods including butterfly buns, cheesecake, pizza rolls, and we participated in a fun quiz whilst we all enjoyed the treats on offer and this was won by our Paraplanning Manager, Jonathan Warhurst.

We all feel extremely proud to do as much as we can to help Macmillan Cancer Support who work tirelessly to give help and support to those living with cancer. Here at EFS we endeavour to support where we can and will continue to fundraise for charities that seek to improve lives.

On the day we managed to raise a fantastic £232.50 due to the generosity and baking efforts of everyone involved. Well done!

Supporting

**WE ARE  
MACMILLAN.  
CANCER SUPPORT**



# Getting to know the people behind the business

You will no doubt be familiar now with this section of Essential Finance, where over the past number of editions we have gradually introduced you to our hard-working internal team at Pennine House. You may not see these people on a regular basis or even at all, but their roles are just as important as the ones of the employees you have met. We think it's only fair these members of staff get their deserved recognition too.



**SARAH PYRAH**  
Employee Benefits Specialist

## What is a typical day for you?

I am fortunate to work three days per week. My workdays consist of an early start, setting off at 7.40am to arrive at the office for 9am.

I work within the Corporate Team and work on Group Life (Death in Service), Group Income Protection, Group Critical Illness, Group, (and individual) Private Medical Insurance, Employee Assistance Programmes and Cash Plan Schemes. My day-to-day work involves arranging renewal terms on existing schemes we look after, undertaking Market Reviews, obtaining new business quotations,

writing reports and answering general enquiries from clients.

My non-working days are spent undertaking much more exciting tasks such as housework, shopping etc, and are also spent meeting my mum (and sometimes dad) or friends for lunch. We are also currently extending our home so my days off are often spent organising the house renovations and tradespeople which can be fun!

## How do you spend your weekends?

As I am off two days during the week, our weekends are usually fairly free (except for more recently painting and decorating/choosing bathrooms etc). During the football and cricket season, I have lunch with Andrew (my husband and fellow Eastwood's employee/Director) before he goes to watch (suffer) Bradford City or Yorkshire with his youngest son and I will meet with friends for coffee and a spot of shopping.

Saturday evenings are spent with Andrew, sometimes meeting up with Andrew's eldest son and heading to Saltaire or surrounding areas to visit independent pubs to try various craft beers and hopefully watching some live music. We also enjoy comedy gigs and in August this year fulfilled one of our bucket list items by spending a week at the Edinburgh Fringe.

I also have a 16-year-old son who has just commenced a Mechanical Engineering apprenticeship so he's at work/college during the week, then on a weekend he volunteers at Keighley Worth Valley Railway which is a heritage steam railway.

## Are you more of a bookworm or a film buff?

Neither to be honest. I only read books when away on holiday (or studying!). I am more likely to sit down and watch a true-life drama series on Netflix.

## Can you describe your perfect holiday?

I am not a beach/swimming pool person, I like to experience the local culture, food and experience a different way of life, but it has to be hot and sunny! I am happy to sunbathe for a short while in the early afternoon and go out for a meal and drinks (cocktails) in the evening and maybe go for a walk. I always buy the 'lonely planet' guide for where we are going so I find out about any hidden gems in the surrounding areas.

## What are your hopes for the months ahead?

Finally get the house renovations finished!



**FAISAL RAZZAQ**  
Employee Benefits Consultant

### **What is a typical day for you?**

My day starts with my drive across the Pennines, it starts my day in a peaceful and reflective way, I am a huge believer in starting your day with a positive.

Me being an employee benefits consultant, no day is the same, it's very diverse, and trying to fit each client's needs in different ways is essential.

I could be going through a renewal for one but then working with a provider to launch a new benefit for another.

I tend to finish my evenings with the gym or a run as I truly believe that just because you are in your 40's, you don't have to feel it.

### **How do you spend your weekends?**

I am a huge family and friends' person; my weekends are spent making memories. I tend to plan weekends with breaks away or meals and evenings with friends and family.

I also love going for a long run on a Sunday which plays a huge part in setting me up for the week ahead.

Weekends are for living your best life, whether that be laughing or feeling good in what you do for yourself or making memories.

### **Are you more of a bookworm or a film buff?**

A book person, I'm yet to find a film that has kept me awake throughout.

I love to read personal development books, *The Secret* and *The Magic* (both by Rhonda Byrne) being huge favourites.

Books that allow me to add small tasks daily that fill me up with gratitude or make me feel better when the day starts to lead the way.

### **Can you describe your perfect holiday?**

I love city breaks, exploring history and taking in the culture and the vibe of places, my favourites being, Paris, Milan, Vienna and Istanbul.

My favourite destination must be either Dubai for the peace, sun and taking in the comforts it offers and but also Los Angeles for the experience, the hikes but also the varied cultures and way of life it offers.

### **What are your hopes for the months ahead?**

My hopes for the months ahead would be to start my training on the group risk products, having 10 years' worth of knowledge in healthcare products, I am ready to grow and learn further.

With me still being relatively new to Eastwoods, I want to continue to grow strong relationships with clients, enabling me to meet expectations and what they need.

I am also looking to get away for a city break, and take some much needed time to myself.



**SARAH REDSHAW**  
Income & Transformation  
Manager

### **What is a typical day for you?**

I start my day with a strong cup of coffee and sit for 5 minutes in peace, before the madness of the day starts. Once at work, my role is very varied. My main role is the income reconciliation, matching all the fees and commission, ensuring this is all complete for reporting at month end. I also work closely with other members of the team to help look at ways we can improve the processes of the business and ensure procedures are followed correctly.

### **How do you spend your weekend?**

As a busy working mum, I spend most weekends catching up on household chores, or stood at the sidelines watching my boys play football. From time to time, I do enjoy catching up with my friends and family and don't often say no to an invite to a bottomless brunch!

I also have a very crazy Cocker Spaniel pup called Toby, so this ensures I get out and about in the fresh air!

I am also training for a marathon next year, so I do try to get out on a run on a weekend, as well as running after work.

### **Are you more of a bookworm or a film buff?**

I do love a good read, from romantic novels to true crime, a good thriller or an auto biography, anything that is a good page turner. One of my favourites is *The Book Thief*, which has also been made into a film, but in my opinion, the book is better.

### **Can you describe your perfect holiday?**

My perfect holiday would be any place, as long as the sun is shining, I can sit and relax in the warmth with a good book and a nice glass of wine.

### **What are your hopes for the months ahead?**

To be able to get the perfect work life balance and to ensure my family and friends are healthy and happy in life.



**KATHERINE SIME**  
Paraplanner

### **What is a typical day for you?**

I start my day by cleaning and occasionally going for a walk or heading to the gym. My working day begins at 9 am and no two days are alike. It's a busy schedule that involves tasks like report writing and technical research, each day bringing a new challenge. I really enjoy the variety in my role. In the evenings, I go to the gym, cook for my teenage daughter, and unwind by watching a film or documentary.

### **How do you spend your weekend?**

I enjoy doing housework, catching up with friends, and taking long walks in the countryside. Having recently moved to Longridge, I love discovering new coffee shops and spending time outdoors. I also have a mountain bike that I take out when the weather is nice, and I'm planning to get a road bike soon to start taking cycling trips around the UK.

### **Are you more of a bookworm or a film buff?**

I think film buff over books as I read a lot through work, I love Star Wars and Marvel films.

### **Can you describe your perfect holiday?**

Anywhere warm with a beach and good music is perfect for me. I recently took a trip to Malta, where I attended a Liam Gallagher music festival. It was a nice change to enjoy some sun at a festival, and I had a great time watching several bands, along with a DJ set at Café del Mar, which was a stunning venue. I plan to travel more in the coming years now that my daughter is older and more independent.

### **What are your hopes for the months ahead?**

I'll be working towards my chartered exams, enjoying my new home, and planning a few more holidays abroad with friends, as well as bike rides around the UK.



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[www.eastwoodfinancial.co.uk](http://www.eastwoodfinancial.co.uk)

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

Tel 01422 377 737 Email [office@eastwoodfinancial.co.uk](mailto:office@eastwoodfinancial.co.uk)

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