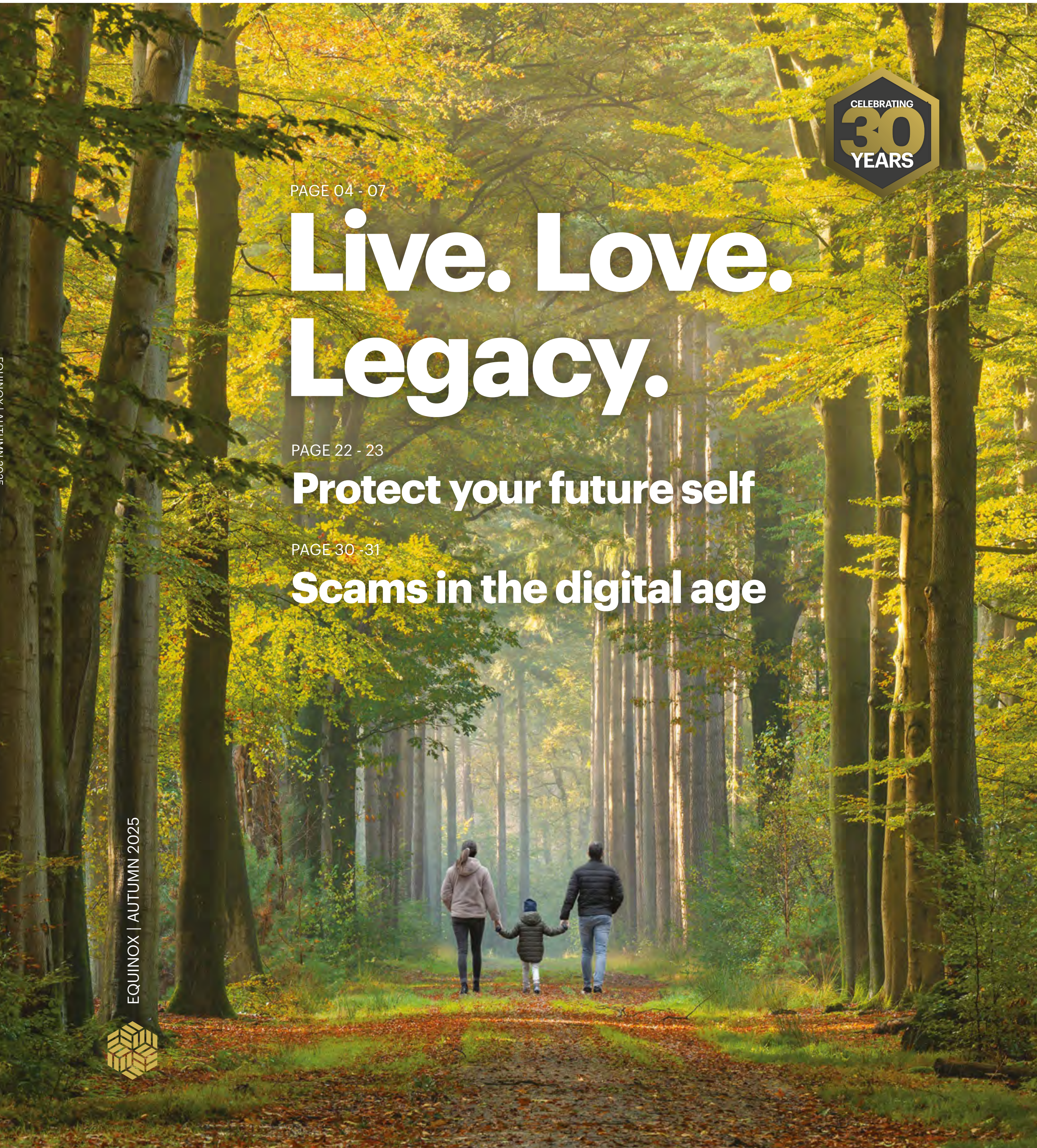
EQUINOX

NEWS, INSIGHTS AND EXPERT FEATURES



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Scams in the digital age

EQUINOX | AUTUMN 2025

Welcome

Welcome to the Autumn 2025 edition of Equinox!

In this special anniversary issue, we reflect on the lessons learnt over three decades in the markets, how the business has evolved, and the people – clients, colleagues, and our community – who have made it all possible.

Through changing times, from market highs and lows to evolving lifestyles and new technologies, our commitment to helping our clients gain confidence and clarity around their money remains steadfast.

You'll find practical guidance on financial planning, protecting your future self, digital safety and preparing for retirement - alongside a real-life story that highlights the importance of making a will. This year also marked our second Equilibrium Foundation Grant Awards, where four fantastic charities were awarded a share of £30,000.

Thank you for being part of our journey. We hope this edition informs, inspires, and connects you - whether you're looking back with fond memories, planning for the future, or simply enjoying the moment. Here's to the next 30 years – together!

As always, please feel free to contact me directly with any comments or questions at colin.lawson@equilibrium.co.uk.

Colin Lawson
FOUNDER

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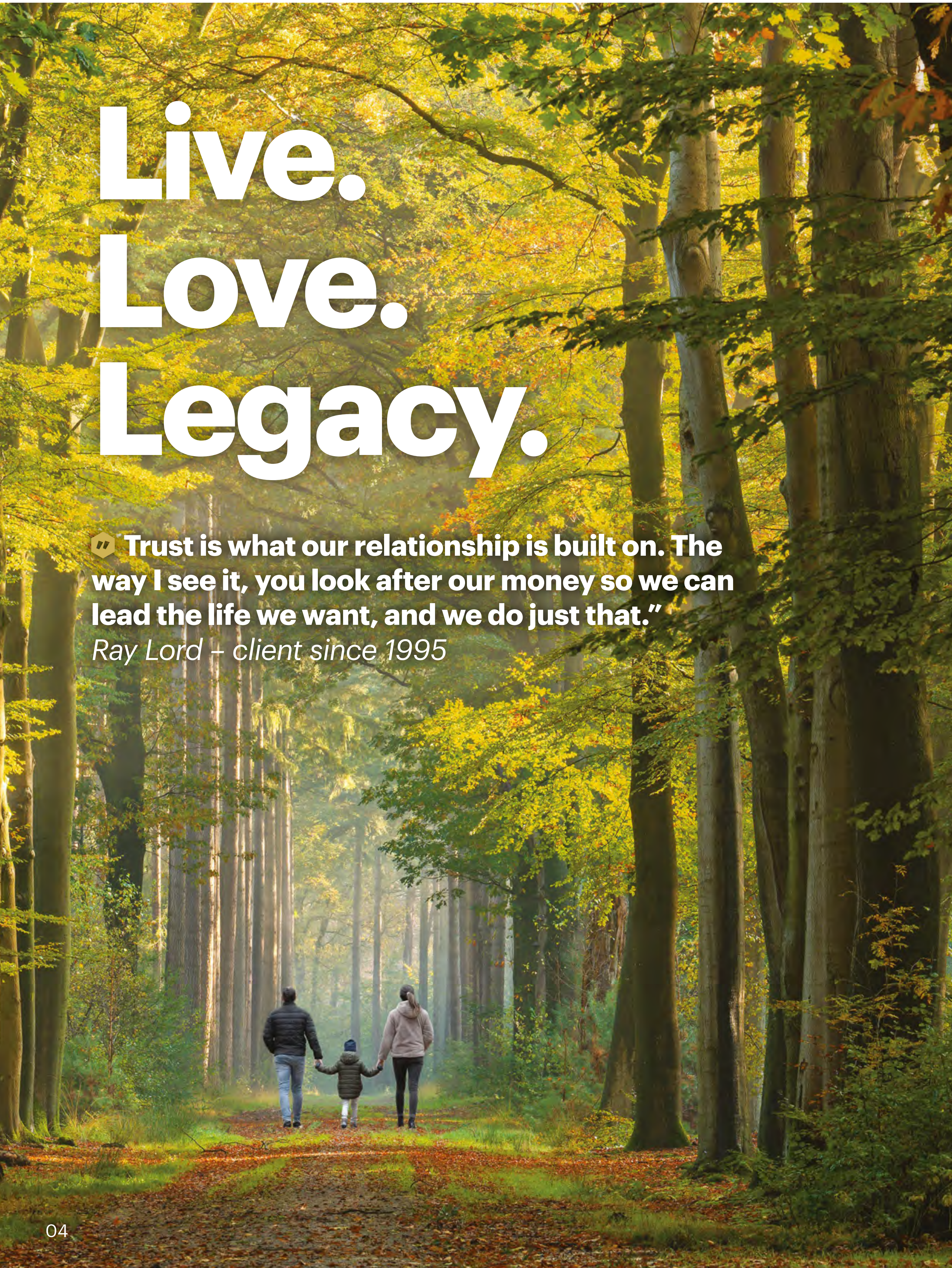

Live. Love. Legacy.

"Trust is what our relationship is built on. The way I see it, you look after our money so we can lead the life we want, and we do just that."
Ray Lord – client since 1995

THE SUNDAY TIMES 100 BEST SMALL COMPANIES TO WORK FOR

Colin Lawson founded Applewood Financial and our first-ever clients came on board in August 1995

CELEBRATING 30 YEARS

As I reflect on our 30th anniversary, I'm deeply moved by the incredible journey that has shaped our firm and the lives we've touched along the way. This milestone is not just a celebration of our achievements, but a tribute to the enduring spirit, commitment, and care that have guided us from the very beginning.

From our humble beginnings when I started out of a back bedroom and my first-ever clients, Ray and Sylvia Lord came on board, each milestone has been a testament to the enduring values at our core - integrity, excellence, simplicity, and growth. The timeline overleaf is more than a record of dates and achievements; it is a living story of ambition, adaptability, and authenticity - for our clients, our team, and the community we're proud to be a part of.

Every chapter - from our first office opening to our continual evolution - has been guided by a passion for making people's lives better. Join us as we revisit the defining moments, remarkable individuals, and collective progress that have written the legacy of our first three decades.

Find out more

Meet Equilibrium's first-ever clients. You can read the full article about Ray and Sylvia Lord in Autumn 2022 edition of Equinox online here **equilibrium.co.uk/library/meet-equilibriums-first-ever-clients**.

1995 - 1998

- Colin Lawson founded Applewood Financial.
- We opened our first office in Didsbury.
- We welcomed our first team member.
- We held our first seminar at Adlington Hall.


APPLEWOOD
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1998 - 2000

- The company evolved into The Applewood Group.
- We relocated to our new premises in Handforth.

2000 - 2005

- Marked by the turn of the Millennium, the client base had a growing number of millionaires.

2005 - 2007

- We became a Limited Liability Partnership (LLP).
- Our office relocated to Brooke Court in Handforth Dean.
- We became directly authorised by the FSA (now known as FCA).

2007 - 2010

- Mike Deverell's appointment to Investment Manager marked a new era.
- Model portfolios were launched.
- We transitioned to discretionary investment management.
- We became Equilibrium Asset Management, and a new business model was launched.

2010 – 2013

- The Equilibrium Foundation was born.
- Equinox made its debut.
- Our presence grew with a new office in Chester.

2013 – 2016

- We achieved CII Corporate Chartered Status.
- We acquired new premises at Evolution House and a permanent office in Chester.
- Our 21st anniversary was marked with a special client and team event at Tatton Park.

2016 – 2019

- We launched our core portfolio funds.
- We introduced Libby - a financial literacy programme for primary schools.
- The Foundation reached its £100k fundraising target.
- We made our debut in the Best Companies rankings.

2019 - 2021

- Covid struck just as we moved to Ascot House.
- We swiftly adopted technology for client meetings, communication, and online events.
- Our first client advisory group was held.

2021 - 2022

- We launched our Live Love Legacy proposition, closely reflecting our core values of integrity, excellence, simplicity, and growth.
- We created our bespoke customer relationship management system to streamline client data and engagement.

2022 – 2024

- We hosted the first of many London events for our southern-based clients.
- The Equilibrium Foundation hit a £1 million milestone in donations to good causes.
- We hosted our first-ever masterclass.

2024 – 2025

- We introduced a streamlined service known as ‘Essentials’ for those with less complex financial planning needs.
- Our Christmas lunches attracted a record attendance of more than 700!
- We celebrated 30 years in business!!

Relishing or resisting retirement

What will life be like after you retire?

For many, retirement represents freedom - the long-awaited chance to slow down, travel, or finally spend more time with loved ones. For others, it can feel daunting - a cliff edge where the structure of working life suddenly disappears. At our forthcoming masterclass, Relishing or Resisting Retirement, we will explore why this transition can feel so different for different people, what can be done to make it a positive and fulfilling stage of life and how engaging with a financial planner can make all the difference.

Retirement: A new and evolving concept

One of the first points we highlight is that retirement itself is a relatively modern idea. For most of history, people simply worked until they could no longer do so. The idea of stopping work in later life only really came into focus in the early 20th century, championed by industrialists like Henry Ford, who saw value in creating space for older workers to step aside for younger ones.

In the UK today, there's no fixed "retirement age". Some stop around the state pension age, while others retire earlier thanks to personal wealth, inheritances, or business sales. Increasingly, many are working well beyond 65, whether for financial security or simply because they enjoy their careers. Retirement is therefore less of a date on a calendar and more of a personal decision - and the experience of it is shaped by both financial and emotional factors. Crucially the decision to stop is not always financial!

The financial pitfalls

From a financial perspective, there are several common pitfalls we see when individuals move into or "resist" retirement.

1. Miscalculating income needs.
It's easy to overlook the fact that some costs fall away when you stop working - you no longer pay National Insurance contributions, commute, or save into pensions. Conversely, some expenses rise, especially if you finally have time to travel or pursue new hobbies.

2. Over- or under-estimating investment returns of your pots.
Compounding works both ways: small misjudgements in expected returns can lead to large differences in outcomes over time.

For example, suppose you have a £500,000 pot invested over 10 years:

At **2% annual growth**, it would rise to around **£609,500**.

At **5% annual growth**, it would grow to about **£814,500**.

At **7% annual growth**, it would increase to over **£983,500**.

The gap between the low and high growth scenarios is nearly £375,000 - enough to dramatically change your lifestyle. This illustrates why realistic assumptions and regular reviews are so important.

3. Overlooking assets beyond pensions.
Inheritances, downsizing property, or releasing equity can make a significant difference to retirement cashflow, but many people fail to (or sometimes in the case of inheritance, refuse to) factor these into their plans.

4. Sequencing risk.
One of the lesser-known but critical risks is sequencing risk - the danger of experiencing poor investment returns early in retirement when you are drawing from your pot. Even if markets recover, those early losses can permanently reduce the sustainability of your income.

Take this example:

Retiree A starts with £500,000 and withdraws £25,000 each year, a 5% withdrawal rate. In the first three years, markets fall by 10% annually before recovering with strong 10% returns thereafter. After 20 years, Retiree A has only around **£100,000** left.

Retiree B experiences the same sequence of returns, but in reverse: strong gains of 10% first, followed by 10% losses for the last three years. After 20 years, Retiree B still has around **£400,000** remaining.

Both retirees achieved the same average return over the 20 years, yet their outcomes are drastically different. The only difference was the timing of returns relative to withdrawals. That's why careful planning, diversification, and flexible withdrawal strategies are essential.

“Whether retirement is relished or resisted depends on preparation - both practically and emotionally”

5. Inflation and longevity.
With people in the UK living longer than ever, retirement pots must stretch further. Inflation compounds the challenge, steadily eroding spending power over decades. These twin risks mean financial planning can't simply stop at the point of retirement - it must be dynamic and adaptive.

The human side

While the numbers matter, finances are only one piece of the retirement puzzle. Equally important are the psychological and emotional shifts that come with leaving the workforce. To thrive in retirement, individuals need to satisfy what psychologists call the six human needs:

1. Certainty – The comfort of knowing your finances are secure, your health is managed, and life feels stable.

2. Variety – With more free time, people need stimulation: new hobbies, experiences, or travel.

3. Significance – Many derive self-worth from their careers. Retirement requires finding new ways to feel valued, whether through volunteering, mentoring, or family roles.

4. Connection – Work often provides daily social contact. Retirement can risk isolation unless new social ties and communities are cultivated.

5. Growth – Humans thrive when learning and developing. Retirement can be a time for study, skill-building, or pursuing long-neglected passions.

6. Contribution – Giving back, whether financially or through time and energy, helps provide purpose beyond self-interest.

A fulfilling retirement balances these needs as much as it balances the books. Without this attention to the human dimension, even the most financially secure retirement can feel empty.

From resisting to relishing

Ultimately, whether retirement is relished or resisted depends on preparation - both practically and emotionally.

Those who resist often do so out of fear: fear of running out of money, fear of losing identity, or fear of the unknown.

Those who relish it will have already taken steps to understand their finances, anticipated the risks, and designed a lifestyle that gives them meaning.

The question is, where will your journey take you?

Speak to an expert

We do more than financial planning - we help you align your wealth with your values and goals so you can retire confidently.

Call **0161 486 2250** or contact your usual Equilibrium contact. If you're new to us, call **0161 383 3335** or scan the QR code to book a no-cost, no-obligation chat with one of our friendly experts.

BY MARK BARLOW

The Payne of not having a will

How would your loved ones be affected if you didn't have a will in place?

The tragic and untimely death of former One Direction popstar Liam Payne caused an outpouring of grief and shock across the world, especially among his close family and his partner of two years, Kate Cassidy. Seven months after his passing, it has been revealed that he died without a will in place, leaving a fortune of £24 million after debts and expenses were deducted. So, what does this mean for those closest to him?

The first complication is that the probate court will step in to appoint administrators to manage the estate. Generally, these laws prioritise close family members, such as spouses, children, and other relatives. In this instance, the

"Wills and powers of attorney are perceived as something for the elderly and only become a priority when, in many cases, it is too late to achieve the desired impact"

court has appointed the mother of his child, Cheryl (formerly known as Cheryl Tweedy), and lawyer Richard Bray with a limited grant of representation, described as being *"to allow the administrator power to preserve the deceased's estate until a general grant is made"*.

While they currently have limited powers in what they can do, it will never be known if Payne would have wanted either involved. If he had a will in place, he could have decided on the executors and the powers they have, potentially speeding up the process and reducing the burden at an extremely stressful time.

The next key variation of not having a will is that the estate will fall under the UK rules of intestacy, which state that a person's spouse, and then any children they have, are first in line to claim the estate. As Payne had no spouse, the entire estate is inherited by his 8-year-old son.

Once again, it will never be truly known if that would have been his wish, as he had a partner of two years and was believed to be close with his family. It is expected that the estate will be placed into trust for his son, and once the general grant is made, the appointed administrator will manage and distribute the estate.

The estate reportedly includes four London-registered companies in Payne's name, plus a jointly owned real estate company. Additionally, he holds joint stakes with other members of One Direction in two Ireland-registered companies. The administrators will also be legally responsible for his money, property, and possessions.

It is hoped that the administrator will know which of his assets are more sentimental than others and how they should potentially be retained or liquidated. They will also be in charge of appointing suitable professionals to take charge of the various assets of the estate. This will undoubtedly bring a variety of voices, opinions, and decisions into how Payne's estate should be managed, but sadly, it will never be possible to ascertain if these decisions align with his wishes.

When real-life, high-profile cases like this arise, it is difficult to understand why he did not have a will in place. You might expect that he would have been surrounded by professionals advising him of the benefits. However, as we unfortunately see all too often, wills and powers of attorney are perceived as something for the elderly and only become a priority when, in many cases, it is too late to achieve the desired impact.

At Equilibrium, we believe that having appropriate wills and powers of attorney in place is essential for everyone - regardless of age or health, and they should be reviewed regularly. We are happy to work alongside individuals and families to ensure that, in what will already be an extremely traumatic time, we can help to bring financial comfort in life and death. We work closely with many local solicitors and would be glad to make a recommendation for the one we feel would best suit your circumstances.

Find out more

Speak to Equilibrium to put the right plans in motion, from wills to wider estate and future planning.
Call us on **0161 486 2250** or get in touch with your usual Equilibrium contact.
New to Equilibrium? Call **0161 383 3335** for a free, no-obligation chat.

Growing with purpose

Culture and Recruitment Manager, Kelly Eyton-Jones, introduces some of the latest talent to join the Equilibrium team.

As we celebrate an incredible milestone - 30 years of Equilibrium - it's the perfect moment to reflect not only on how far we've come, but also on how we continue to grow. From a one-person start-up to a team of over 90 dedicated professionals, our journey is a story of continuous evolution. In the last year alone, we've welcomed 16 new team members.

In a world that never stands still, neither can we. To stay ahead, businesses must evolve - and for us, that evolution always starts with our people. Here's a look at some of the new talent helping us shape the next chapter of Equilibrium.

Powering better decisions – our new Data Engineer

As part of our growing Finance and Insight team, our new Data Engineer may work behind the scenes, but the impact of their role is felt across the entire business. By building and maintaining the systems that manage our data, they ensure we're working with accurate, high-quality information at every level.

We were delighted to welcome Matt Gumbley to the team in January, bringing with him more than five years of valuable data expertise. In just a short time, he's already made a big impact.

Matt's work focuses on identifying trends, supporting strategic decision-making, and enhancing our internal reporting - helping to ensure we have the insights we need to plan effectively for the future. His work serves as a constant reminder to us that smarter data leads to smarter decisions, which ultimately drive better outcomes for everyone!

Making technology work smarter – our Systems Developer

Jake Steele joined us in September 2024, and since then has been key to maintaining and developing our internal client relationship management system. He's even built a custom app for the Culture team (the team I work on) - tailored to exactly how we work!

As our business continues to grow, so does the complexity of the systems we depend on. That's why we were very excited to welcome Jake as our new Systems Developer. His focus is on enhancing our custom platform to make it faster, more intuitive, and better aligned with our needs.

From building automations to integrating new tools, Jake is streamlining processes and saving valuable time across departments. The result? Our client-facing teams can focus on what they do best - supporting clients and delivering outstanding service.

People power everything we do. Every new recruit brings fresh energy, ideas and perspective"

Putting clients first – our Client Managers

Some roles form the backbone of a business - and at Equilibrium, our client managers do exactly that. We've recently welcomed several highly experienced professionals into this team, each bringing a wealth of expertise and impressive Chartered and Fellow-level qualifications.

One of our fantastic new recruits is Tom Machin, who joined us in March. Tom brings years of experience, alongside the distinguished achievement of Fellowship status. With a background that includes people management, he has settled into the team with ease, and it already feels like he's been part of the Equilibrium crew for much longer than a few months!

Our client managers look after a dedicated group of clients, working hand-in-hand with our financial planners to deliver tailored, values-led advice. They build lasting relationships, understand what matters most, and help shape financial plans that truly reflect our clients' goals.

As we continue to grow, adding exceptional talent like Tom ensures we maintain the consistency, care, and quality our clients depend on - helping them live the life they want, look after those they love, and leave a powerful legacy.

Investing in the future – The Diploma Academy

We don't just hire for today - we develop for tomorrow. Our Diploma Academy is a perfect example of this mindset. Created for those looking to launch a career in financial planning, the Academy is open to anyone with ambition, curiosity, and a drive to learn.

This year's cohort comes from a range of backgrounds – from a recent graduate to a career changer - and they'll benefit from hands-on experience, mentorship, and full support as they work towards professional qualifications. We're excited to begin this journey with them, and can't wait to see how they help to shape the future of Equilibrium.

People power everything we do. Every new recruit brings fresh energy, ideas, and perspective. They challenge us to improve, push us to innovate, and help raise the bar for what great client service looks like.

Here's to them - and to the next 30 years of evolving with purpose!

Mind your business

Colin Lawson, entrepreneur, founder, and managing partner, shares the lessons he has gained throughout his career.

This year marks a significant milestone as we celebrate our 30th year in business - a journey defined by resilience, innovation, and an unwavering commitment to excellence.

Reflecting on Equilibrium's journey, I want to share 30 key business lessons learned over three decades. These insights have shaped our success and offer practical advice for building a lasting business.

The key to success
Success is a formula that can be followed. It is rarely accidental, but rather the result of deliberate steps and thoughtful action.

The customer is always right
Customer experience is everything – people remember how they feel.

Back yourself
Stay positive and try different things. Just because it hasn't been done before, doesn't mean it can't be done.

Plan well
Be disciplined with your diary by planning ahead and setting specific days to rest, focus and plan.

Keep moving
If you don't know where you are going, keep moving forward and you will figure it out along the way.

Be bold
Set clear, strategic actions and establish ambitious long-term objectives also known as Big Hairy Audacious Goals (BHAGs).

Be healthy
You need energy to work at your peak and achieve maximum performance.

Value experience
Look to others to show you the way. Sometimes those with more experience really do know what's best.

Invest in people
You might worry they'll move on, but if you don't invest in them, would you truly want them to stay?

Teamwork is dreamwork
You can never do it all on your own. Ask for help and work hard to build a team which supports you.

Show appreciation
Say please and thank you, and be grateful for the small things as well as the large.

Leap into the unknown
To climb a career ladder you need to let go of the rung below. To be successful you have to take a giant leap.

Cash is king
Revenue is vanity, profit is sanity, but cash is king. The best business in the world can fail if you haven't got the cash flow.

Crack a smile
A smile goes a long way on a miserable day and could even spark a meaningful connection.

Look for the blockers
The founder may unknowingly become the blocker - recognising this can be a turning point.

Focus on the solution
If you focus on the problem it gets bigger. If you focus on the solution, there is no problem.

"Integrity and trust are your most valuable assets"

There's always a choice
Choose wisely. Knowing when to concede and when to persist is a crucial skill that can save you time, resources, and unnecessary stress.

Culture and values are everything
If you share the same values and believe in the same culture, all the big issues become small ones over time.

Don't bury your head in the sand
Always deal with the issues as they arise however tough it is. It's far better than letting them fester.

Insights are intrinsic
Ensure your data is reliable, and delve beyond the numbers to uncover the real story.

What weakness?
Persistence and stubbornness, when focused correctly, really do pay off.

Embrace change
Seek out the potential and opportunities that change brings, rather than dwelling on the drawbacks.

Leave the ego behind
Enthusiasm, confidence and arrogance can be a dangerous combination (unless it's backed up with experience and money).

Think outside of the box
If you do what you've always done, you will get what you've always got.

Where true value lies
Integrity and trust are your most valuable assets.

It's all in the detail
It's not enough to have great ideas; your true advantage comes from flawless execution.

Stay calm!
Being stressed is counterproductive. Focus your energy on the things you can change and find a moment of calm reflection.

Don't waste time
Encourage those around you to act decisively, as time waits for no one; a year can pass in the blink of an eye!

Seek inspiration
Discover it in unexpected places, insightful writings, and successful people.

Accept and move on
There are some establishments, such as regulatory bodies or major organisations, you can't beat. Sometimes you have to suck it up and accept the consequences.

BY RACHEL GRIFFITHS

Supporting our communities...

From The Foundation upwards

In celebration of Equilibrium's 30-year anniversary this summer, four incredibly deserving charities were awarded a share of our £30,000 community grant.

This year's focus was on education and employment programmes for those aged 16 and above, helping them take charge of their own future.

EQUILIBRIUM FOUNDATION

Down Syndrome Cheshire - Has empowered 3,000 people with Down Syndrome across Cheshire to unlock their potential and lead happy and fulfilling lives. They do this by changing perceptions, creating opportunities and educating the wider community.

RISE UP - Every young person deserves a pathway to independence and success. This is the deep-rooted belief of the youth employment charity RISE UP. It challenges the system that creates barriers to employment by working with 16–30-year-olds furthest from the labour market.

Smart Works - Since opening in 2015, Smart Works Greater Manchester (SWGM) has supported 5,500+ women into work. It supports unemployed women aged 16-67 to create a route out of poverty, including socially disadvantaged women such as school leavers, HMP Styal Prison ex-offenders and women on zero hours employment contracts.

Nurturing foundations - Doing exactly what its name suggests, Nurturing Foundations is a 100% minority-founded and led organisation supporting children, young people and their families to have the aspirations, resilience and skills to flourish and play an active part in civic life.

BY NEAL FOUNDLY

30 years in the markets: Happy returns!

Portfolio Manager, Neal Foundly, reflects on 30 years of fund management amid major geopolitical shifts and technological advancement.

"War in Europe, major negotiations about global tariffs and concerns about overvalued technology companies but with hopes of lower interest rates in the coming months."

Not a headline from last week but the state of the world thirty years ago in 1995. The war in Bosnia was raging, the World Trade Organisation was formed, and the 'dotcom' boom was kickstarting that year (oh, and Toy Story was smashing it at the box office!). These three themes – war (or lack of it), trade and technology - were key to what followed for the next three decades.

War and peace

The Bosnian conflict was the last armed conflict in Europe which was eventually resolved by the end of 1995.

Table one: Total return of the main indices (over the last 30 years)

	1995-2025 cumulative	1995-2025 annualised
UK Consumer Price Index (inflation)	105%	2.4%
FTSE Actuaries UK Gilts All Stocks	112%	3.9%
FTSE 100 Index	665%	7.0%
MSCI World Index in £	1075%	8.6%
UT Mixed Investment 20-60% Shares	352%	5.2%

Source: FE Analytics 01/07/2025 data from end June 1995 to end June 2025; local currency basis

At the time, defence expenditure in the EU was around 3% of GDP. The "peace dividend" in Europe, the economic benefits reaped from reduced military spending following the cessation of fighting, allowed countries to shift resources towards public services like healthcare, education and fiscal policies to promote economic growth.

However, the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 has led to a re-evaluation of defence priorities and an end to this period of reduced military spending but in the intervening period, served to boost demand growth.

Enter the Dragon

The creation of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in 1995 was a significant point in global economic history.

In particular, it was China's admission to the WTO in 2021 that changed the global economic order. China has benefited massively from enhanced trade flows made possible by its WTO membership, becoming the largest trader in goods and the second largest trader in services in the global economy today.

This was a global win/win. Within China there were significant gains from 1990 to 2015, whereby extreme poverty declined from 67% to under 1%.[1] On a global scale, the rapid rise in exports of low-cost Chinese products helped keep western inflation in check whilst the Chinese market of nearly 20% of the world's population opened up (to varying degrees) to western companies.

That interweb thingy

1995 was the year you used the Netscape Navigator browser to check AOL or Yahoo! for emails with dial-up internet, which was a screechy phone-based way of getting online. If you did, you were definitely an early adopter because less than 2% of the UK population had internet access.[2]

But this was the start of something much bigger - it was the start of the technology boom, both in terms of online business and stock market returns.

Online sales were less than 0.5% of total retail sales but growing rapidly.[3] Amazon was not listed on the stock market for another two years; Google was not founded for another three years; Mark Zuckerberg was celebrating his 11th birthday and would not launch Facebook for another decade.

Yet investors could see the future trend. Between 1995 and 2000, the technology-laden Nasdaq Composite Index rose 400%. Many companies that investors favoured saw amazing share price gains - in 1999, shares of telecoms equipment company, Qualcomm, rose in value by 2,619% and twelve other large stocks each rose over 1,000%.

The boom continued until March 2000, when the NASDAQ Index peaked. Interest rates were rising, there were concerns that Japan was going into recession and the merger of Yahoo! and eBay was in doubt (at the time Yahoo! was valued at $125bn compared to Apple at $15bn).

It was downhill from then.

By the end of the stock market downturn in 2002, shares had lost $5 trillion in value, and the NASDAQ Index had dropped 78% since its peak.

Clearly, all was not lost, however. As we know, the technology boom resurged and from the lows of October 2002 to mid-2025, the index has returned 3,316% (data from FE Analytics 07/10/2002 to 30/06/2025).

Table two: Equilibrium portfolios compared with Mixed Investment sector and inflation (December 2007 – June 2025)

	Beats inflation %	Real return >1% p.a.	Real return >2% p.a.	Real return >3% p.a.	Real return >4% p.a.
Cautious	100%	83%	64%	59%	46%
Balanced	100%	98%	69%	61%	56%
Adventurous	100%	100%	99%	70%	60%
Mixed Sector	100%	64%	57%	26%	2%
BoE Base	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Source: Equilibrium Investment Management / FE Analytics 31/12/2007 to 30/06/2025 based on rolling 10 years relative to UK Consumer Prices Index inflation

The largest company is now $4 trillion in size which is around 15% of US GDP – back in 1995, the largest company was General Electric which was 1.3% of GDP.

It feels like technology is embedded in almost every facet of life and yet we are seemingly on the verge of another new wave that includes artificial intelligence, quantum computing, genome editing, and robotics.

Tricennial returns

Clearly, there are a number of major global events that occurred over the last three decades including the introduction of the euro currency, the September 11 terrorist attacks, the credit crisis, Covid, and many more. Over this time, often as a result of these events, markets went up and down, but if you had simply invested in 1995 and gone on holiday for 30 years, you would be pretty pleased with the returns overall (which is why we advise to invest for the long term and try to ignore short-term volatility if you can).

Table one shows the percentage total returns over the period.

As you can see, equities have done very well over the period but even well-diversified portfolios such as those in the 20-60% Shares sector have returned over three times the level of inflation over the thirty years.

The Equilibrium era

Equilibrium's discretionary management service commenced at the end of 2007. Since then, we measure 10-year periods every month on a rolling basis, i.e. the first one recorded from 31 December 2007 to 31 December 2017, the second being 31 January 2008 to 31 January 2018, and so on. This gives us a valuable long-term measure of how we are performing against three main comparators – cash, inflation, and the competition.

Table two summarises how our portfolios and the Mixed Investment sector have done over 91 x 10-year periods against different levels of inflation.

As you can see, our Balanced portfolio, for instance, has had returns of 4% or more ahead of inflation more than half the time since inception compared with just 2% of the time for the sector (and never by cash). Indeed, across the three Equilibrium portfolios, each has beaten cash and the sector over time.

History has shown that it is impossible to build portfolios that will excel year-in, year-out. We always know there is scope for improvements, and we constantly strive to refine and enhance the portfolios.

As such, we are determined that going forward our investment process will drive as good, if not better, returns of the last 30 years over the next three decades.

This article is intended as an information piece and does not constitute investment advice. Past performance is for illustrative purposes only and cannot be guaranteed to apply in the future. Investments will fall as well as rise.

*If you have any further investment questions, please don't hesitate to contact us on **0161 486 2250** or reach out to your usual Equilibrium contact.*

(1) www.statista.com/uk-internet-penetration
(2) What Happened When China Joined the WTO? | CFR Education
(3) US Census Bureau (fred.stlouisfed.org/series/ECOMPCTSA/)

Financial Planning 101

Chartered Financial Planner, Ben Harrison, outlines the five fundamental pillars of constructing a sound financial plan.

A few years ago, my dad decided to build a garden table for my mum. With a questionable level of confidence, and a drill that hadn't been charged since my brother finished school, he set out to create his masterpiece.

By lunchtime, the table was complete. By the time the BBQ was ready, it had collapsed under the weight of a couple of burgers and a hotdog. The issue? Only three of the four legs had been properly secured. The fourth one was, in his words: *"imminent"*.

Much like my dad's DIY disaster, your financial plan needs all its legs firmly in place to stand the test of time. Whether you're approaching retirement, considering helping your children financially, or simply wanting more control over your future, getting the fundamentals right matters.

Here are the five essential pillars we believe form the foundation of a strong, balanced financial plan:

1. Create a rainy-day fund

Before anything else, make sure you can weather life's inevitable showers.

From car trouble to urgent home repairs - or a surprise vet bill - a cash buffer gives you breathing room when the unexpected strikes. As a rule of thumb, setting aside three to six months' worth of essential expenses in an accessible savings account for working individuals is appropriate.

No investment risk, no bells and whistles, just money you can access without delay.

"Your financial plan needs all its legs firmly in place to stand the test of time"

Think of it as the umbrella that stops short-term problems from soaking your long-term plans.

2. Pay off high-interest debt

First and foremost, debt isn't always bad. A low-rate mortgage or structured borrowing can make financial sense. But credit card balances or overdrafts with 15%+ interest? Those are financial termites quietly eroding your foundations.

Paying off expensive debt is a risk-free return on your money. For example, clearing a credit card charging 24% interest is effectively like getting a 24% return - with zero market risk.

This stage is about clearing the clutter, simplifying your cash flow, and freeing up more of your income to do things that actually support your goals.

3. Protect what you've built

It's easy to skip over personal protection, especially if your kids are grown and the mortgage is nearly paid off. But insurance isn't just for rainy days - it's for peace of mind.

At this life stage, cover like income protection, critical illness, or life assurance can help protect your partner, secure outstanding financial commitments, or ensure a legacy for your loved ones.

For parents, family income benefit is another under-used option too. It pays out a tax-free income until a specified date, replacing your lost income.

We've seen too many otherwise well-crafted plans unravel because illness or loss of income wasn't factored in. A safety net here can be the difference between financial resilience and financial regret.

4. Maximise your surplus

Once you've got the basics in place, the next step is making your money work smarter and harder.

ISAs and pensions are the two most effective tax wrappers available to UK investors. ISAs offer tax-free growth and withdrawals. Pensions provide tax relief on contributions and tax-free growth.

Stocks and Shares ISAs are fantastic as they can be used for short-, medium- and long-term planning.

As pensions can be accessed at age 57 (from April 2028), these are most definitely long-term growth vehicles. Although accessibility may appear frustrating, the huge benefit of pensions is that compound interest can work its magic, as it cannot be interrupted for a long time.

Both have contribution limits, so consulting an expert is important. Annual allowance, pension carry forward, and strategies like using pension contributions for higher earning parents to retain child benefit or qualify for up to 30 hours of free childcare per week, can be complex.

Smart tax planning isn't about dodging HMRC. It's about using the rules to your advantage, legally and strategically.

5. View the bigger picture

This is where it all comes together. Referring back to my dad's table, cash flow modelling represents the tabletop now the four legs are solidly in place, ready to use for various purposes.

This is the single most powerful tool we use in financial planning. It gives you a visual, year-by-year projection of your financial life - from now, through retirement, to your legacy.

You'll be able to see clearly:
- When you can afford to retire.
- What level of spending is sustainable.
- How gifting or downsizing might impact your future.
- Whether you're on track- or not?
- Even better, we can stress-test your plan against different scenarios. What if inflation spikes? What if you live to 100? What if you take that once-in-a-lifetime trip?

With the right tools, you can replace uncertainty with clarity. And clarity is priceless.

The four-legged table you can rely on

Financial planning doesn't need to be overwhelming. But it does need to be balanced. Just like my dad's second attempt, this time with all four legs secured (and double-checked by my mum) your plan should feel steady, flexible, and built for the long haul.

Whether you're five years from retirement or just want to tidy up the edges of your finances, starting with these pillars gives you a structure you can build on.

If you'd like help reviewing your own financial "table" or you're worried one leg might be a bit wobbly - we're always happy to have a chat.

This article is intended as an information piece and does not constitute investment advice.

*For advice on any of the points raised, please call us on **0161 486 2250** or reach out to your usual Equilibrium contact.*

Protect your future self

Why starting early with insurance can save you more than just money.

Money for nothing but peace of mind for free!

When it comes to talking to those in their early 20s about insurance, it's generally as hot a topic as pensions, mortgages, and interest rates. What's more, it becomes even less appealing when they realise that they should spend money on it with the ideal outcome of never actually claiming the benefits!

In the United States, those between the ages of 18-29 are referred to as the 'Young Invincibles' by the insurance industry because they perceive themselves as immune to sickness and injury and have the general attitude of 'it won't happen to me'.

When you secure your first job, you are excited about the independence it brings and the financial

"What would you do if you couldn't work for a significant period? Who would pay your phone bill, gym membership, or car insurance?"

opportunities to be a bit frivolous. Fast forward to your first pay packet, and once you've got over the shock of tax and national insurance, many are then reticent to commit to additional expenses such as insurance and pensions at a time when most want to enjoy life. However, when it comes to insurance, the younger you are, the cheaper it is, and a few pounds each month could make a massive impact on your life.

Along with independence comes a responsibility that not many think about. With no mortgage or dependents, why would you need insurance as your untimely demise wouldn't financially impact anybody else? However, what would you do if you couldn't work for a significant period? Who would pay your phone bill, gym membership, or car insurance? This is where income protection policies can become not necessarily a life saver, but more of a lifeboat.

Income protection, as the name suggests, is there to replace your earned income should you no longer be able to work due to illness or injury. It will typically replace between 50-75% of your gross salary until you return to work, retire, or the policy term ends.

Like many insurance policies, this coverage can be adjusted based on individual requirements, such as selecting a deferred period that matches an employer's sick pay policy, opting for benefits that increase with inflation, and determining the amount needed to maintain a similar standard of living until returning to work.

So, how much will this cost? Well, for a typically healthy, non-smoking 25-year-old male earning £32,000 (the average wage for a 25-year-old[1]), the cost for the maximum cover is a measly £13.61 per month![2] For this, you would get a tax-free income of £1,733 per month after the deferred period of three months. This would be payable, if necessary, until age 68, and the benefit would even increase in line with RPI to give further protection. Given the monthly benefit is 78% of your net monthly income of £2,222, this should be able to more than cover your basic living expenses until you are back on your feet again.

Amazingly, based on this example, if you were to only ever receive a single month's benefit of £1,733, this is the equivalent of paying the premiums for over 10 years! For peace of mind while you embark on the typically uncertain early stages of your career, this does represent truly remarkable value for money!

Now that your income is sorted, and as you progress in your career, you may want to look to buy your first home with your partner. No doubt this will be the most expensive part of your life up to this point, with a myriad of charges and fees. But when the dust settles and your mortgage starts, it is worth considering mortgage protection. This, in essence, guarantees to pay off your mortgage on death, and however unlikely this may be, the benefit to your partner in knowing the major monthly outgoing would be settled can bring peace of mind at a heartbreaking time. Sound expensive? Worry not, this is one of the most cost-effective types of insurance. For just £6.30 per month[2], you could cover a mortgage amount of £204,300 (90% of the average first-time house cost[3]) for 25 years! The simple reason that the cost is so cheap is that it is based on repaying your mortgage on death, therefore as your mortgage reduces over time with your monthly repayments, the benefit also decreases at a similar rate.

So, for under £20 a month, you could have both your income and life protected, knowing that you and your family are safeguareded for two of the most unthinkable occurrences we try not to consider.

For those with younger family members in this position, you could consider funding the premiums to give peace of mind for both you and them. Furthermore, if you have an inheritance tax liability, the premiums could be made as a gift out of surplus income, thus reducing your liability and effectively giving a 40% reduction on the premiums!

It truly does pay to consider your options, and we are always more than happy to help, so please call us on **0161 486 2250** or contact your financial planner to discuss this further.

(1) www.instantoffices.com
(2) www. exweb.exchange.uk.com
(3) www.rightmove.co.uk

Ready for retirement?

Chartered Financial Planner, Paul Farrugia, provides your friendly expert checklist.

Retirement. For some, it's a long-awaited reward after decades of hard work. For others, it's a leap into the unknown. Whether you're counting down the days or just starting to think about life after work, one thing is certain: a well thought out plan can make all the difference.

At Equilibrium, we believe retirement should be a time of freedom, not financial stress. So we've pulled together a practical checklist to help you prepare with confidence. Think of it as your personal roadmap to a fulfilling and financially secure retirement.

1. Gain clarity on your pensions

Start with the basics: your State Pension. Check your forecast on the government website.[1] If there are gaps in your National Insurance record, you might be able to top them up. This can be especially important if you've already stopped working.

Next, gather details on all your private and workplace pensions. Are they invested appropriately when taking your plans into account? Do they offer the flexibility you need? It's also worth reviewing the death benefits and your tax-free cash position. If you're in your final working year, think carefully about whether a final lump sum (or, even better, salary sacrifice) contribution might be worthwhile.

And don't forget those "lost" pensions – services like the Pension Tracing Service can help you track them down.[2]

2. Map out your spending

Retirement spending isn't static. You might spend more in the early years – holidays, hobbies, helping the kids – and less later on. Create a spending forecast that includes one-off costs and compares your pre- and post-retirement budgets. What expenses will disappear? What new ones might arise?

Also, think about how your spending might change in later life. Will you need care? Will you want to downsize? Preparing for these changes in advance can reduce uncertainty in the future.

> **"We believe retirement should be a time of freedom, not financial stress"**

3. Review your savings, investments and debts

Take stock of your savings and investments. Are they working hard enough for you? Could you improve tax efficiency, especially between spouses? If one of you has little or no taxable income, there may be opportunities to reduce your overall tax bill.

Now's also the time to look at any outstanding debts. Should you pay them off before retiring? And do you have an emergency fund – ideally, enough to cover several months of essential spending?

4. Understand your income strategy

Where will your income come from in retirement? Pensions, ISAs, rental income, dividends? Make sure you understand the tax implications of each source. A well-structured withdrawal strategy can make your money go further.

Cash flow planning is key. Run different scenarios: What if inflation rises? What if markets dip? A good adviser can help you stress test your plan and explore safe withdrawal rates (like the often quoted 4%).

If you're retiring mid-tax year, you might benefit from lower tax on your final year's earnings. And if you're married, the marriage allowance could also help reduce your overall tax liability as this allows one spouse or civil partner to transfer a portion of their unused personal allowance to the other spouse or civil partner.

5. Think beyond finances

Retirement isn't just a financial shift; it's a lifestyle one too. What will your days look like? If work gave you a sense of purpose, how will you replace that? Volunteering, part-time work, education or new hobbies can all help fill the gap.

It's also a good time to review your legal affairs. Are your wills and powers of attorney up to date? Have the practical implications been considered, such as, who will inherit what? Are there sufficient liquid assets to meet any tax liability? We often consider this through our dress rehearsal.[3]

Have you considered how property fits into your long-term plans – whether that's moving, downsizing, or making adaptations?

And don't forget healthcare. If you had private cover through work, do you want to continue it? What about life insurance or income protection – are they still relevant?

" If work gave you a sense of purpose, how will you replace that?"

6. Family matters

Do you still have parents around? Their future might impact yours – emotionally and financially. Do you need to support them? Are you likely to receive an inheritance? Having open conversations now can help everyone plan better.[4]

7. Check in with yourself

Finally, ask yourself: How do I feel about retirement? What are my hopes and my worries? What would make me feel truly comfortable stepping into this next chapter?

Retirement is a big transition, but with the right planning it can be one of the most rewarding stages of life.

The article is intended as an information piece and should not be construed as advice.

*If you would like help turning this checklist into a personalised retirement plan, call us on **0161 486 2250** or reach out to your usual Equilibrium contact.*

(1) www.gov.uk/check-state-pension
(2) www.pensionsdashboardprogramme.org.uk
(3) article: equilibrium.co.uk/law-in-order
(4) article: equilibrium/courageous conversation

Taking wisdom from the shelf

Benjamin Jones, Director of Macro Research for the Multi-Asset Strategies (MAS) UK team at Invesco, and guest Equilibrium speaker, shares his latest reads.

Against a backdrop of relentless change and uncertainty, it's tempting to reach for easy answers. Yet, as the world pushes further into unfamiliar territory - politically, economically and technologically - the most pressing questions rarely come with simple solutions. The following books dissect our modern dilemmas and perhaps, point toward a better way forward.

Is this time different?

A heavily debated question. I think big changes are afoot and I have been heavily influenced recently by *The Fourth Turning Is Here: What the Seasons of History Tell Us About How and When This Crisis Will End* (Neil Howe). Howe's book argues that history follows a four-phase cycle, with the current "Fourth Turning" marked by crisis and upheaval. According to Howe, this painful period, driven by generational shifts, could ultimately pave the way for a new era of renewal by the early 2030s. The turmoil we see today, while difficult, may be a necessary step toward progress.

Disillusion and the housing debate

Trump's rise reflects deep societal disillusionment, especially around housing and youth prospects - issues unlikely to resolve soon, keeping US politics polarised beyond the next election.

Abundance: How We Build a Better Future (Ezra Klein and Derek Thompson) argues that restrictive rules and NIMBY (not in my back yard) movements, particularly in Democrat-led areas, have made building homes harder and costlier. As basic needs like shelter become harder to meet, other political causes can seem out of touch to those struggling to secure a home of their own.

Why do big projects fail?

If building more homes is so important, why do so many well-intentioned projects go off the rails? The book *How Big Things Get Done: The Surprising Factors Behind Every Successful Project, from Home Renovations to Space Exploration* (Bent Flyvberg and Dan Gardner) deftly weaves the personal (think overrunning kitchen renovations) with the epic (the saga of the Sydney Opera House), illuminating why projects so often balloon beyond their budgets and timelines - and most crucially, how to do better.

Trade, tariffs and the future of growth

No Trade is Free (Robert Lighthizer) is a worthy read to understand some of the motivation around tariffs. Lighthizer, former US Trade Representative, argues that tariffs and new trade policies are necessary to counter lost manufacturing jobs and rising "deaths of despair" in the US. While I share concerns about unequal growth, I don't believe tariffs are the solution.

Growth: A Reckoning (Daniel Susskind) discusses this topic too and offers alternative, and better, in my opinion, approaches.

Economic weapons

Biden's sanctions on Russia's central bank marked a turning point, leading many to reconsider their USD holdings. For insight, *Chokepoints: How the Global Economy Became a Weapon of War* (Edward Fishman) details how economic sanctions have become key tools in global power struggles, and how these tactics are reshaping international politics and business.

The dollar debate

The US administration, including Stephen Miran (Chair of the Council of Economic Advisers) wants a weaker USD. I don't think this means the end of the USD as the reserve currency just yet, but I think it means we see a change in how it is used and held. Economist, Kenneth Rogoff, via his podcast, offers a sharp rejoinder to those who predict the imminent demise of dollar dominance. While he notes the USD may have peaked, he contends that changes in its global role will be gradual and nuanced, rather than catastrophic.

Materials and technology

The transition to a greener, more technologically advanced future depends on materials as much as ideas. *Material World* (Ed Conway) takes readers on a journey from the dustiest mines in Chile to the most sterile factories in Taiwan, examining six essential materials - oil, copper, iron, lithium, sand, and salt. Conway's narrative reveals just how interconnected, and at times fragile, our supply chains have become. Alongside this, *Chip War* (Chris Miller) provides an impeccably researched history of the semiconductor industry, chronicling the rise and future of the tiny chips powering our devices - and some of the world's thorniest geopolitical dilemmas.

The human side of AI

Equilibrium's Neal Foundly recommended *The Coming Wave* (Mustafa Suleyman) and it is a worthwhile read, though it can be a bit alarmist in places.

Co-intelligence: Living and Working with AI (Ethan Mollick) is my standout favourite. The author uses AI throughout the writing process to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of this technology. His core advice, is use it, use it, use it. Or you will be left behind. And it is not hard to use. Unlike previous technological advancements, it is very cheap and easier for end consumers to embrace.

Hope in the data

It is easy, amidst the bad news and constant upheaval, to lose sight of the bigger picture. For a restorative dose of perspective, *The Better Angels of Our Nature* (Steven Pinker) provides empirical evidence that, for all our troubles, the world has never been better in so many fundamental ways. Progress, Pinker argues, is real - though cyclical - and worth fighting to maintain.

These books offer neither a single answer nor a simple path forward. Instead, they illuminate the complexity of our times and challenge us to think more deeply, act more wisely, and, above all, keep reading.

Find out more

Benjamin Jones: Time in the Market | Podcast on Spotify

Exploring the world solo

Equilibrium client, Liz Turner, shares her experience of travelling independently.

Travelling alone can be a big a step, especially if taking the plunge for the first time. But it can also be a life-changing experience and the start of an incredible new chapter.

Before she was widowed, Liz had always enjoyed travelling with her husband. Determined to continue her journeys independently, she looked for ways to travel without relying on family or friends for companionship. Although she didn't enjoy her initial solo experience to India with another tour operator, she subsequently discovered One Traveller and has been a loyal client ever since.

Each trip with One Traveller proved equally rewarding, and Liz's positive experiences inspired her to share her story with the Equilibrium community and recommend this way of travel to others in similar circumstances.

Finding courage on the road

It takes courage to set out alone, but Liz soon learned she wasn't truly alone at all. Each trip introduced her to fellow travellers whose backgrounds differed, but whose curiosity and zest for life mirrored her own. Conversation flowed easily, and shared adventures quickly wove strangers into friends.

Embracing a supportive community

What makes solo travel so rewarding? For Liz, it was the blend of independence and support. There was freedom to explore at her own pace, paired with the reassurance of friendly faces and a knowledgeable guide on hand from the moment she arrived at the airport. There was no pressure to do everything set on the itinerary, it was so well organised but people could come and go as they pleased.

Memories beyond the itinerary

The most memorable moments weren't found in guidebooks, but in laughter over shared meals, spontaneous conversations, experiencing things the "local" way and the sense of belonging she discovered along the way. The journeys weren't just about destinations - they were about people, stories and the simple joy of discovery.

Liz recalled: *"Some of my favourite moments were taking the train up the Matterhorn, sharing fondue in Gruyères, wine-tasting and trying delicious local food at a farm—just a few of the many highlights that made my trips unforgettable."*

Advice for aspiring solo travellers

Liz encourages anyone hesitating on the edge of a solo journey to take that first step, describing it as *"a lovely way to travel when you're on your own"*. Liz firmly believes that travelling is not about ticking places off a map; it's the magical feeling of seeing new places, gaining new experiences, and sharing it with others."

Hear from One Traveller: The mature solo holiday specialists

One Traveller are the specialists in creating escorted solo holidays for the mature traveller, offering a friendly arm around your shoulder and a guiding hand. We're here to help you enjoy your travels and meet new friends along the way.

Whether travelling solo through choice or circumstance, you'll find our groups to be full of good conversation and like-minded folk with similar interests. With no families or couples, you can relax and enjoy exploring the world (or a little closer to home) with people just like you.

Our friendly office team know just how much courage it can take to pick up the phone. They're on hand to answer all your questions. We'll take care of everything, from planning your itinerary, organising your flights, meals, even the table plan! Once the holiday begins, our dedicated Tour Managers are there to ensure you are well looked-after and are never left on your own (unless you so wish).

Every One Traveller holiday includes:

- Your own double room in quality hotels.
- A dedicated Tour Manager, who will be by your side from start to finish.
- Travel with like-minded company as it's specifically designed for the mature solo traveller, aged 50+.
- Fixed and fair pricing and no last-minute discounts or sales - everyone pays the same.
- Destinations personally visited by our experts so we can vouch for their quality.
- Deposit Guarantee provides reassurance when your plans have to change.
- So much MORE included, all excursions, most meals and many drinks. See individual holidays for more details.

Scams in the digital age

Beware, online scams prey on the 30-60 age group.

Technology and all it entails is often seen as a young person's game, right? They're always up to date with the latest innovations, from artificial intelligence (AI) to virtual reality (VR), but is this stereotype correct?

When it comes to being scammed online, the general perception is that those aged 60+ are the most vulnerable. They're often assumed to be less familiar with digital platforms, making them seem more susceptible to online scams. Media stories about pensioners losing life savings to scams tend to get more attention, reinforcing the idea that older people are frequent victims.

However, this lazy stereotype is far from the truth. According to a survey by Santander.co.uk, 46% of scams target those aged 35-65, compared to just 22% targeting those over 66.[1]

Just look at the numbers: in the UK, people aged 35 to 64 spend, on average, just over 5 hours online each day, while those over 65 spend around 3 hours.[2]

So with greater time exposure online, what are the typical threats that those in their 30s to 60s are being exposed to?

The latest must-see event

We might not go out as much as we did when we were younger, but when we do, we usually spend more because we want to make it count. This can involve going to a show, concert, or sporting event, with average tickets typically costing £100+. With the rise of reselling websites, an amazing 20% of tickets are now sold this way. This can lead to higher pricing but also opens the doors to scam websites purporting to have access to must-see tickets.

During the summer, Oasis-mania swept the nation, and with that came unprecedented demand for tickets. Hundreds of fans reported being scammed, with the average loss being £436.[3] Over 90% of reported cases began with fake adverts or posts on social media, with the vast majority originating on Facebook, including Facebook Marketplace.

A quick search on Facebook reveals numerous unofficial groups, many boasting tens of thousands of members, dedicated to buying and selling tickets for the Oasis tour. This is despite Meta's own commerce policy stating that the sale of concert tickets is "not allowed" on the platform.

"Pay with your credit card for more protection"

Building scams

As we reach our 30s, we often focus on moving house or renovating our existing property as our family and needs grow. Children are not only expensive, but also take up a lot of time, meaning those DIY jobs we used to do now have to be outsourced to professionals. These professionals often have a professional website, with pictures selling the no-hassle renovating dream!

However, the urgency to get these jobs done has seen a surge in building-related fraud over recent years. Scammers ask for large upfront payments before vanishing without a trace or leaving behind dangerous and substandard work. In many cases, fraudsters claim to hold professional qualifications, duping victims into handing over thousands of pounds for work that was never completed.

Many of these payments are made online using authorised push payment (APP), where victims are tricked into transferring money directly into criminals' accounts. These can be accounts in fake names, but many victims tend to think they are protected as payment is made online rather than by cash.

Top tips

Humans are impulsive by nature, and sometimes the heart rules the head. So, when it comes to buying tickets or undertaking building work, we recommend the following four basic rules:

Stick to trusted businesses
Always use reputable companies that have a proven track record.

Check your URLs
Manually search for the trusted website and avoid using AI-generated links as AI models, such as Chat GPT, do not check the validity of the links they generate. This increases the chances of users being directed to a fake page.

Be cautious on social media
You can't always verify if a ticket listing is genuine or who building work was actually carried out by. Fraudsters can easily create fake ads using fake images.

Avoid deals that look too good to be true
If a ticket is being sold at an unusually low price or for a sold-out event, it's a red flag. Similarly low price online building quotes should be researched diligently.

Use a secure payment method
Pay with your credit card for more protection. PayPal is also safer compared to bank transfers.

At Equilibrium, we place great importance on making our clients aware of scams. We strongly urge everyone to attend our Cyber Security Masterclass, designed to increase awareness in all ages and focus on preventative measures to tackle this ever-increasing threat. You can book the Masterclass via our website or through your usual Equilibrium contact.

Finally, if you are worried you have been scammed, please contact Action Fraud immediately on **0300 123 2040**.

(1) www.santander.co.uk
(2) www.lancasterguardian.co.uk
(3) www.lloydsbankinggroup.com

BY JOHN CLAYTON

Crown Green Bowling in the heart of Prestbury

Equilibrium client and experienced bowler John Clayton showcases Prestbury Bowling Club's activities as it celebrates 25 years.

Imagine stepping out into a peaceful stretch of emerald lawn, sunlight dappling through the trees, where laughter carries on the breeze and friendly competition brings neighbours together. Crown green bowling isn't just a sport - it's an invitation to connect, unwind, and discover a timeless pastime at the very heart of the community. Whether you're seeking gentle exercise, a new hobby, or simply the joy of learning something fresh, Prestbury Bowling Club offers the perfect welcome for all ages and abilities.

Nestling in the centre of the village, just behind the Village Hall in lovely, maintained gardens, lies the Prestbury Bowling Club. Established 25 years ago with loans and guarantees from villagers, plus grants from Sports England and the National Lottery, the club is registered with the Cheshire County Bowling Association and exists to provide crown green bowling facilities to its members and their visitors.

Bowled over by community spirit

The Club is a valued community hub that serves more than just its members. It is a unique facility representing a beautiful garden space at the heart of the village. Our clubhouse and kitchen have recently been thoughtfully refurbished, offering a cosy and welcoming space where members and visitors can relax together after a game. Guests often comment on the friendly atmosphere and sense of community it provides.

Open days

We strongly encourage folk to come along and see what we have to offer and play a few 'ends' with a member on our open days which feature on a weekend early in the season.

Visitors welcome

The Club is open to visitors who can use the green for a small fee when hosted by a member. The Club also hires out the green to other local groups or societies in the community and provides members to help host bowls games and use of the green if needed.

Supporting people with disabilities in the community

The Club is committed to enabling the disabled members of our community to enjoy a game of bowls and has appropriate equipment for that purpose including wheelchairs designed specifically for use on the bowling green.

We have recently extended our role in the community to include regular hosting of residents from the David Lewis Centre. The Club also hosts a group of bowlers that suffer from multiple sclerosis (MS), making full use of the green-friendly modified wheelchairs. Furthermore, the Club has equipment specifically designed for crown green bowling for the partially sighted.

Let the good times bowl

The Club provides bowling at all levels, including Social Bowling, Competitive Bowling, League Bowling and an internal ladder competition. It's a not-for-profit organisation, run by its members whereby day-to-day activities are directed by a management committee and oversight is provided by trustees.

Social Bowling

Bowlers can enjoy friendly non-competitive bowls throughout the season, which runs from mid-March to mid-October. Social bowling can be arranged for any time outside of the fixed slots used for league matches, and specifically 'roll-ups' are in place every week on Wednesday and Friday afternoons.

Competitive Bowling

A programme of full-day and half-day competitions is organised each season with refreshments provided. Practice matches are organised on Monday and Tuesday afternoons through the first half of the season to give bowlers match play experience in a non-league environment.

League Bowling

The Club puts out seven teams every week. Each team consists of eight players and at least one reserve player. The Club teams are entered in the leagues of both the Macclesfield and District plus the Alderley Edge and District Bowling Associations. The Club has installed retractable floodlights to enable certain league matches to be played in the evening.

Ladder competition

A ladder is a great way of getting to know other members. Players of all abilities are encouraged to join in.

More than meets the eye

With 140 members from Prestbury and the surrounding areas, the split of male and female members is very well balanced at around 50:50 with a broad age range.

A sad misconception is that bowling is for "old people", but it really is suitable for younger generations too. They soon realise there's more to it than they think, a sport which requires a good eye and some dexterity to succeed!

For anyone new to crown green bowling, the extensive benefits offered by the Club include:

The provision of equipment

The Club provides equipment free-of-charge to members and visitors which enables any initial investment in the cost of playing bowls to be held to an absolute minimum. Specifically, pairs of bowls of all weights are provided, plus jacks, mats and measures.

Coaching for all levels

Free coaching is available for all levels of bowlers to improve technique. This helps individuals gain confidence on the green and, if needed, to find effective ways to work around any physical constraints. Coaching is provided free-of-charge by experienced bowlers at the Club.

Boules as an alternative

Adjacent to the Bowling Green, the Club has a Boules pit which provides the opportunity for social games of boules. Boules sets are provided at the Club free of charge.

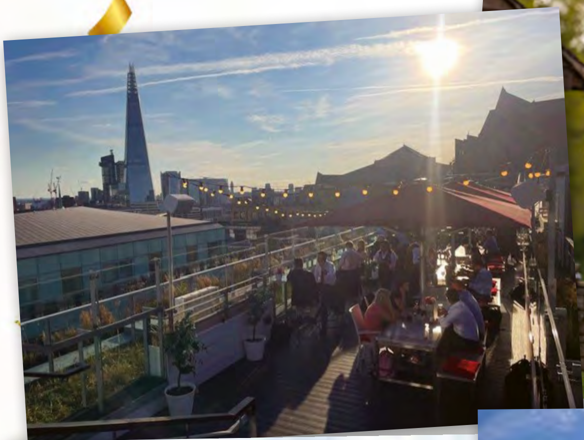
Piqued your interest?

Why not come along for a no-obligation taster session or begin with a guided tour of our facilities? All ages and abilities welcome.

For more information about our club, including membership fees, please see our website at **www.prestburybc.co.uk** or email us at **prestburybc@gmail.com**.

Celebrating 30 years of the Equilibrium community

For three decades, the Equilibrium community has thrived, bringing people together through our exciting calendar of events! From our ever-popular Christmas lunches, highly-anticipated golf days and topical masterclasses to the further afield "Social in the City" and "Investment Insights at The Shard", there's something for everyone. Here, new connections form, old friendships grow, and togetherness thrives.







Celebrate our birthday and win a bottle of champagne

To celebrate 30 years since Colin Lawson founded Equilibrium from a bedroom in Bramhall, we are giving all our clients the chance to win a bottle of champagne. To enter into the draw, please give an online Google review of your experience with Equilibrium.

This would truly mean a lot to us and help others appreciate what a truly unique offering Equilibrium provides.

- Scan the QR code or visit **equilibrium.link/give-a-google-review**
- Share your Equilibrium experience during the last 12 months

Google Reviews ★★★★★

CELEBRATING 30 YEARS

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EQUILIBRIUM

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