Financial Wellbeing: A Manning Gee Investments Whitepaper

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Executive Summary

This whitepaper explores why financial wellbeing is more than just an add-on to financial planning — it is its foundation. With nearly 9 in 10 UK adults lacking confidence in managing money, and over 20 million without savings for unexpected expenses, the need for integrating wellbeing into financial advice has never been greater. We outline the key pillars of financial wellbeing, the societal and psychological reasons people struggle, the value of financial planning in addressing these challenges, and eight practical steps anyone can take to regain control and build long-term financial resilience.

Pillars of Financial Wellbeing

In the first Manning Gee Investments whitepaper, we explore financial wellbeing and why it is not simply a helpful addition to financial planning, but rather its foundation. Financial wellbeing is often misunderstood as being purely about how much wealth someone has. The best description is that:

"Financial wellbeing is not just about wealth, but about feeling secure, in control, and confident about your financial future."

In the UK, growing evidence shows that financial wellbeing has a profound impact on overall wellbeing, productivity, and mental health. According to the Money and Pensions Service (MaPS), nearly 9 in 10 UK adults (88%) don't feel confident managing their money, and over 20 million people say they lack a savings buffer to cope with unexpected costs.[1]

The Financial Capability Survey conducted by MaPS also revealed that financial stress is widespread: more than half of working-age adults reported feeling anxious about their financial situation.[2] And the consequences go beyond the bank balance — money worries are now the biggest cause of stress in the UK, ahead of health, work, and relationships.[3]

These findings underline why financial wellbeing should be viewed as integral to effective financial planning. Good financial advice should not only grow wealth, but reduce anxiety, foster clarity, and empower people to make better choices — emotionally and practically.

Pillars of Financial Wellbeing

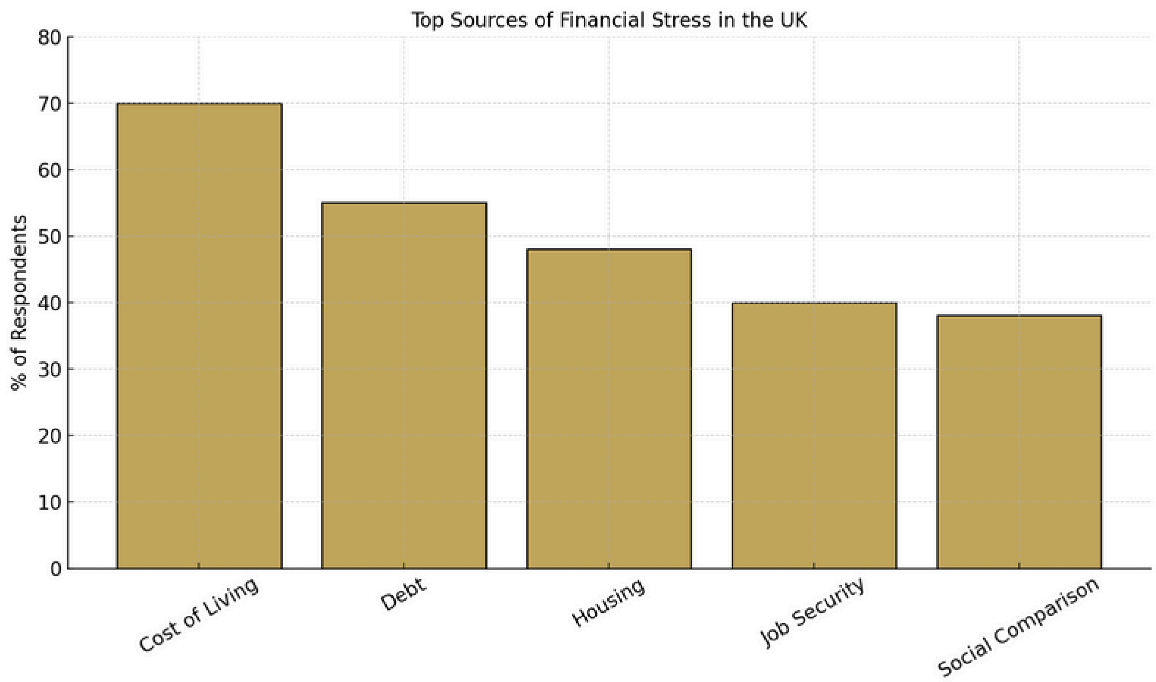
Commonly recognised pillars of financial wellbeing include:

- Control over day-to-day finances – Budgeting, spending within means, avoiding debt stress.
- Capacity to absorb a financial shock – Emergency savings, insurance, income protection.
- Financial freedom to make choices – Ability to take a holiday, change jobs, retire comfortably.
- On track for future goals – Having plans and savings for retirement, property, children's education.
- Healthy relationship with money – Understanding emotions tied to money, avoiding guilt or anxiety.
- Financial literacy and confidence – Knowing how to make informed decisions.

This whitepaper explores why people struggle with financial wellbeing, how financial planning can help, and practical steps to build lasting financial resilience — for today, and tomorrow.

References:
1. Money and Pensions Service: Financial Wellbeing Survey 2021
2. MaPS UK Adult Financial Capability Survey, 2021
3. Aviva Working Lives Report 2022 – found 43% of employees cited money as their top stressor

Why People Struggle with Financial Wellbeing



Source: Aviva, MaPS, The Money Charity

Over the last two decades, technology has transformed how we earn, spend, and manage money — but the real issue isn't just technological. It's our relationship with money, and that starts at home.

There's a growing belief that schools should take on the responsibility of teaching children about money. But the reality is that money habits are formed much earlier — often by age 7 — and are heavily influenced by what children observe at home.[1]

Unfortunately, many UK households avoid talking about money altogether. A 2023 study by the Money and Pensions Service found that two-thirds of UK parents feel uncomfortable discussing money with their children, often because they don't feel confident in their own financial knowledge.[2] This creates a cycle: if no one models good money behaviour, the next generation grows up unsure, unprepared, and lacking role models for financial decision-making.

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Why People Struggle with Financial Wellbeing

At the same time, technology has created new pressures. A smartphone is no longer a luxury — it's a necessity for modern life. Tasks like parking a car, managing a bank account, or even accessing Universal Credit often require digital literacy and online access. This can disproportionately affect older people, low-income households, or those without stable internet access. The Lloyds Bank Consumer Digital Index 2023 revealed that over 11 million UK adults still lack basic digital skills, putting them at a financial disadvantage.[3]

Then there's the issue of spending and credit culture. With just a few taps, you can buy something on Klarna, Afterpay, or a credit card — removing the friction between desire and decision. We're no longer used to waiting or saving. The "buy now, pay later" mindset has normalised instant gratification, and with it, increased levels of consumer debt. UK household debt (excluding mortgages) reached nearly £2,400 per adult in 2024, with credit card borrowing at its highest level since 2008.[4]

As a result, people can start to feel that if they can't afford a certain lifestyle right now, they're failing — even if they're not in financial hardship. It's a symptom of living in a developed economy where the baseline expectations have risen sharply. Social media only amplifies this, with constant comparisons to others' curated financial lives.

And paradoxically, having more money doesn't always improve financial wellbeing. People on higher incomes can still feel overwhelmed, uncertain, or even ashamed. It's easy to overspend, invest emotionally, or be paralysed by too many choices. Wealth without structure can actually increase anxiety — a point highlighted in the Chartered Institute for Securities & Investment (CISI) 2022 report on financial wellbeing, which found that even high earners often report feeling "out of control" with their finances.[5] In short, people struggle not just because they lack money — but because they lack clarity, confidence, and control.

References:

1. Behavioural Insights Team & MaPS – Habit Formation and Learning in Young Children, 2018
2. MaPS – Talk Money Week Research, 2023
3. Lloyds Bank – Consumer Digital Index 2023
4. The Money Charity – UK Debt Statistics, 2024
5. CISI – Financial Wellbeing and the Role of Advice, 2022

How Financial Planning Supports Financial Wellbeing

One of the core ideas explored in The Psychology of Money by Morgan Housel is that for many of us, money controls us, not the other way around. When we feel out of control financially, it can feel like we're constantly chasing our tail — and that sense of powerlessness is a major driver of stress and anxiety.

The Money and Pensions Service reports that financial stress is now one of the most common forms of anxiety in the UK, with over 24 million adults saying that money worries affect their sleep and overall wellbeing.[1] Tackling these concerns can often feel overwhelming, particularly when the problems appear insurmountable — debt, lack of savings, unclear goals.

Yet, when we step back and reassess our priorities, we can regain a sense of perspective.

Reassessing What Matters

Popular culture, through programmes like Ben Fogle's New Lives in the Wild, reminds us that some people choose to walk away from the financial rat race entirely. They may move to remote locations or pursue simpler lives — not because it's easier, but because it feels more meaningful.

Years ago, I visited friends who had left their jobs in the UK to open a bed and breakfast in France. They swapped corporate stress for a different kind of pressure: working hard to build something they cared about. It wasn't glamorous, but it was authentic. They had taken back control, and the difference in their mindset was clear.

Of course, not everyone wants or needs such a dramatic shift — but the example illustrates that clarity about what matters is a powerful first step. Financial planning can help achieve this clarity without having to abandon your current life completely.

How Financial Planning Supports Financial Wellbeing

Clarity and Structure: The Foundation of a Good Plan

At its core, financial planning gives people clarity, structure, and confidence in their financial decisions. It starts by aligning your goals with your values and lifestyle. As financial planners, our role isn't to tell clients what they should want — but to help them understand what's realistic and achievable, and what trade-offs might be needed.

You may dream of retiring early, buying a second property, or working part-time. But how does that stack up financially? What does your partner want? A robust financial plan needs to reflect your whole life, not just the numbers.

The FCA's 2022 Consumer Duty research found that people who receive professional financial advice are more likely to feel confident about their future and less likely to experience financial distress, especially during volatile periods like the cost-of-living crisis.[2]

Accountability and Motivation: Like a Personal Trainer for Your Money

Every 6–8 weeks, my personal training group holds a check-in — not to compare ourselves to others, but to see how we've progressed individually. Financial planning should work in much the same way.

Regular reviews and progress tracking create momentum. A structured plan gives you a framework for decision-making — and over time, this can significantly reduce anxiety. You stop reacting to money and start proactively shaping your life around it.

How Financial Planning Supports Financial Wellbeing

Taking Back Control of Your Financial Life

Once you have a plan in place, you can start to make better use of the resources you have. This includes:

- Making the most of your income
- Building up appropriate savings and emergency buffers
- Utilising tax-efficient investment strategies
- Preparing for life events (retirement, children's education, inheritance)

By integrating financial wellbeing into financial planning, we're not just talking about growing wealth. We're talking about reducing stress, increasing confidence, and enabling clients to enjoy what truly matters.

As MaPS summarises:

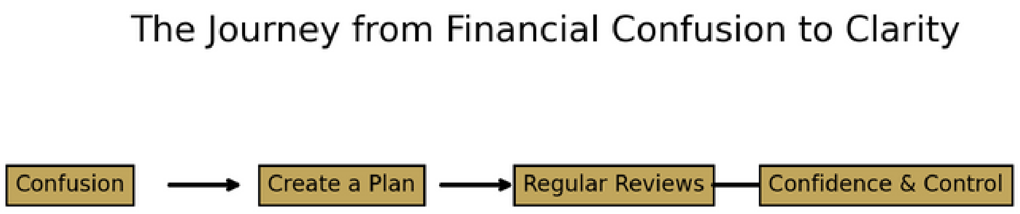
"People with high levels of financial wellbeing feel secure, in control and confident — able to absorb financial shocks and pursue their goals."[3]

Ultimately, financial planning isn't about spreadsheets. It's about helping people live more meaningful, less stressful lives.

References:

1. Money and Pensions Service – UK Financial Wellbeing Strategy, 2023
2. Financial Conduct Authority – Consumer Duty Research Brief, 2022
3. MaPS – Measuring Financial Wellbeing in the UK, 2021

Steps to Improve Your Financial Wellbeing



We've talked about why financial wellbeing matters — now let's focus on how to build it. The key is to start small, stay consistent, and make informed decisions. Here are eight practical steps to take control of your finances and feel more confident about the future:

1. Track Your Spending and Understand Your Income

Know where your money goes each month. Awareness is the first step to control — apps like Moneyhub or Emma (UK-based) can help.

2. Create a Buffer or Emergency Fund

Aim for at least 3–6 months' worth of essential expenses in an easy-access savings account. This reduces financial stress and protects you from shocks.

3. Set Meaningful Goals – Short and Long Term

Whether it's a holiday, house deposit, or retirement — goals give your money purpose. Break them into achievable steps.

4. Pay Off High-Interest Debt

Tackle credit cards, overdrafts, or payday loans first. These can quietly drain your resources and increase anxiety.

5. Understand Your Emotional Relationship with Money

Are you a spender or a saver? Do you avoid looking at your bank balance? Understanding your money behaviours helps you make better choices.

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Steps to Improve Your Financial Wellbeing

6. Get Professional Financial Advice

Working with a financial planner brings structure, objectivity, and accountability. Research from the International Longevity Centre shows UK households who receive advice accumulate £47,000 more in wealth on average over time.[1]

7. Review and Protect Your Position

Check your insurance, write a will, and understand your pension options. Protection planning is a cornerstone of resilience.

8. Build Financial Literacy – Read, Learn, Engage

You don't need to be an expert, just curious. Follow trusted sources like the MoneyHelper service or financial planning blogs to boost confidence.

"Improving financial wellbeing is less about making big leaps and more about making small, consistent choices that align with your values and future plans."

References:

1.International Longevity Centre UK (ILC-UK) in partnership with Royal London, titled: "What it's worth – Revisiting the value of financial advice" (2020)

Conclusion: Putting Financial Wellbeing First

Financial wellbeing is often spoken about as a ‘nice to have’ — something optional, secondary, or aspirational. But as we’ve explored throughout this paper, it is absolutely central to how people experience, manage, and plan their financial lives.

We’ve looked at the core pillars of financial wellbeing, explored why so many people in the UK struggle, and shown how structured financial planning can restore clarity, reduce anxiety, and increase confidence. Finally, we’ve offered practical, actionable steps to begin that journey — no matter your starting point.

What becomes clear is this: money is never just about numbers. It’s about people’s goals, fears, values, and choices. By embedding financial wellbeing into the heart of financial planning, we help clients take control of their present — and feel more optimistic about their future.

Whether you’re facing financial uncertainty or seeking greater alignment between your money and your lifestyle, the support of a trusted adviser can make all the difference.
Financial wellbeing is not the end goal of planning — it’s the reason we do it.

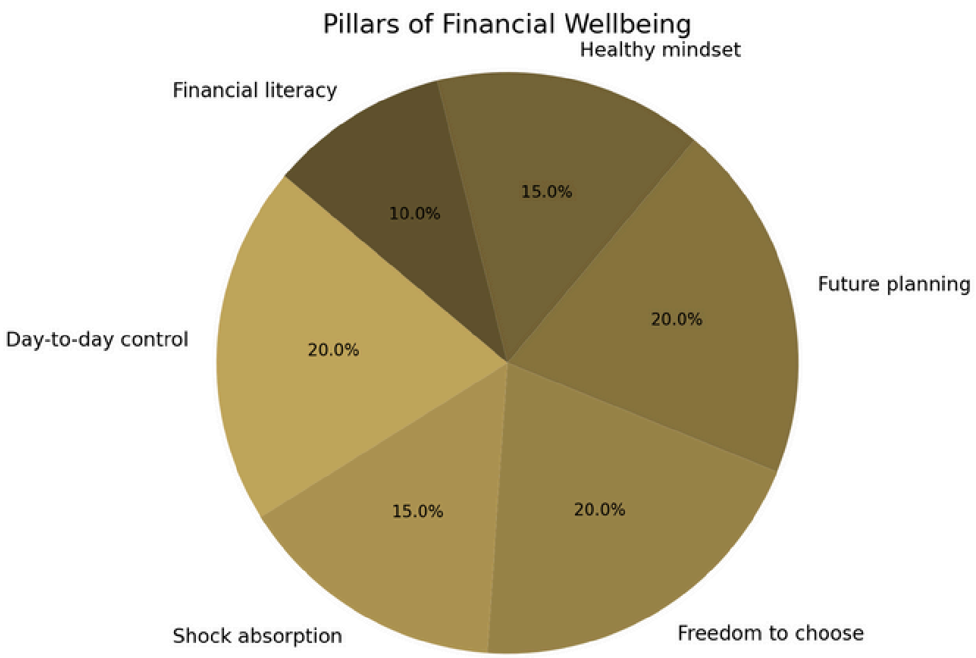

Figure: Key pillars of financial wellbeing, based on research by MaPS and other UK studies.

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Next Steps: Let’s Talk

If you’d like to explore how financial planning can improve your financial wellbeing, speak to a member of the Manning Gee Investments team. Whether it’s building a personalised plan, reviewing your goals, or simply starting the conversation, we’re here to help.

Begin your journey:

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