

Y of Stock Your Plan

What goes
into your
comprehensive
financial plan?



TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR WEALTH

AN OVERVIEW OF VIRTUAL MONEY COACH COMPREHENSIVE FINANCIAL PLANNING

BY MARK UNDERDOWN

The title of my service provides a useful indication to the services I provide:

Virtual – My service is conducted entirely over the Internet.

Money – Strictly speaking it's about your full personal financial picture, mapping your money to your life and comprehensive financial planning, but that's a bit of a mouthful, and I feel the public view financial terms with a little disdain, so I wish to be a little more appealing (and jargon-free).

Coach – I'm not going to be telling you what to do or sell you any financial products. There is no ulterior motive. You pay me a transparent fee to help you with your personal finances. I will be teaching, guiding and helping you, so that you can build your own long-term prosperity.

But of course there's more to it than that. This guide explains my comprehensive financial planning process, the steps involved, what to expect and why you should use Small Acorn Money to help you live a prosperous life.

If after reading this guide you still have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact me via email at mark@smallacornmoney.com.

Start taking control of your wealth. Contact me today to begin your personal and comprehensive financial plan.

It's time to map your money to your own life and goals.

Mark Underdown

Financial Coach
Small Acorn Money



CONTACT

mark@smallacornmoney.com

+44 7901 578 462

+44 1256 790 462

Skype: [mark.smallacornmoney](https://www.skype.com/user/mark.smallacornmoney)

www.smallacornmoney.com

WHAT DO YOU REALLY WANT?

At first glance, this may seem like an obvious and easy question, but anyone who truly spends time contemplating on what they want out of their life and how to use the limited time and resources we all have will realize that this is a challenging and incredibly important question to answer.

Without this focus, you may find yourself in later life filled with regret. This personal focus is the first critical step of ensuring that **your money is working for you** in the way you would like.

The function of money is as a medium of exchange and a store of value, but the **purpose of money is to help you live the life you would like.**

This incorporates simple things such as keeping your family well-fed and housed, and ensuring there isn't too much life at the end of your money; to exploring the world, turning your ideas into innovations, and making your dreams concrete goals that you work towards and bring to life.

Money is a crucial factor in your life because properly managing your money will enable you to be in control of your time, allowing you to pursue the things that are valuable in your life today, and creating the life you would like in your future.

If you do not have a clear idea of what you want and prioritize the things that are important to you, you will find it difficult to make the correct personal financial decisions.



MONEY IS A STRANGE BEAST

OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH MONEY IS EVEN MORE BIZARRE.

Some need to support their family but end up buying things they don't need and get into a spiral of debt. Others spend their lives chasing money and find themselves financially prosperous, but then realize they are incredibly poor regarding their quality of life.

Many who are financially successful become estranged from friends, lose loved ones from lack of attention, and become detached from their family due to lack of time. You, therefore, have to question whether they are successful at all?

Some can never quite earn enough of it. Others earn plenty but just can't seem to keep hold of it.

Some chase dreams in dubious investments, losing their shirt in the process. Others remain fearful of things they don't understand and miss out on huge amounts of money that can be obtained from sensible and patient investment.

There's little point in being the richest person in the graveyard, and equally, it is idiotic to leave yourself financial short, stressed and squeezed.

Nearly all of us don't have the right amount of money; it's either too much or too little (but clearly having too much is preferable!)

So the first and most important stage is to get an understanding of what you actually want and how much these things might cost you; now and in your future.

GATHERING AND ANALYSING YOUR FINANCES

Simply stated, **you need to know where you are before you know where you are going.**

For all of your financial products you need to ask yourself the following questions:



WHAT EXACTLY DO YOU OWN?

WHAT ARE THE FEATURES?

WHY DO YOU HAVE IT?

What exactly do you own?

I'd be surprised if you could accurately state what you own, where it is held, where it is invested etc.

Can you quickly and clearly explain to me what investments you have?

So much of your future prosperity is dependent on where your money is invested. Can you tell me where yours is?

I've spent years doing research into people's finances and the number of people who have their finances properly organized probably ranges around 5-10% of the population. I suppose that's good for me. It provides me with a way to earn a living in areas I find interesting.

Don't feel bad if you don't know exactly what you own; remember you are not alone.

However with my help and support, now is the time to get your financial house in order. Gather up to date valuations and statements of all of your finances and read them.

Make a note of all the things you don't understand and that make little sense to you. I expect there will be a rather long list – It often takes me a little time and a few challenging phone calls to get to grips with some of the financial statements out there, and I have years of experience and professional study under my belt.

What are the features?

I will analyze and assess the features of your finances. This will help to answer some of the following types of questions:

- **Investments**
- What you are currently being charged and what do you receive in return for these costs?
- What risks are you exposed to?
- What kind of investment return could you receive?
- Are you properly diversified?
- **Insurances**
- When will your insurance policies pay out, how much would this be and under what terms?
- What cover do you have, who is it for and what is the reason for that level of cover?
- **Mortgages**
- How much are you paying on your mortgage?
- What are the rates? How will you be affected by rate changes?
- When will you be debt free? Can you make this happen sooner?
- How much can you overpay without suffering a penalty?

- **Pensions**
- Are you contributing enough towards retirement?
- What pension structures do you own
- What are the investment features?
- **Taxes**
- Are there ways to improve your tax efficiency?
- Are you giving undue attention to tax, to the detriment of other factors in your personal finances?



PLEASE NOTE

I cannot explicitly recommend you purchase alternative or new financial products because I am not authorized to provide this 'regulated financial advice' by the FCA. My service is more educational and higher level planning than product focused.

I will, however, point out any problems, suggest improvements, show you how you can take control of your wealth and finally, introduce you to a suitable professional if alternative financial products could help your financial prosperity.

Why do you have it?

It's not enough to simply know what financial position you have. You need to have an understanding of why you have these products, savings accounts, insurances, and investments, etc.

For example, I often find people have shares because they have received them via work, or inherited them; then have simply held onto them.

This is a very poor reason to own the shares of a company, and you need to have a compelling reason for each of your financial positions and understand how they will impact on your current and future prosperity. .

Another example would be insurances. Many people are sold insurance and tend to forget exactly why they have it (i.e. what does it protect and in what circumstances)

What about bank accounts? People tend to keep the same account simply through inertia when ensuring the best rates, service, and security of our cash is so important.

A crucial aspect of taking control of your wealth is to understand why you have the financial position and products that you own.

This will help you make well-informed decisions about your finances that fully incorporate an understanding of your life and personal requirements.

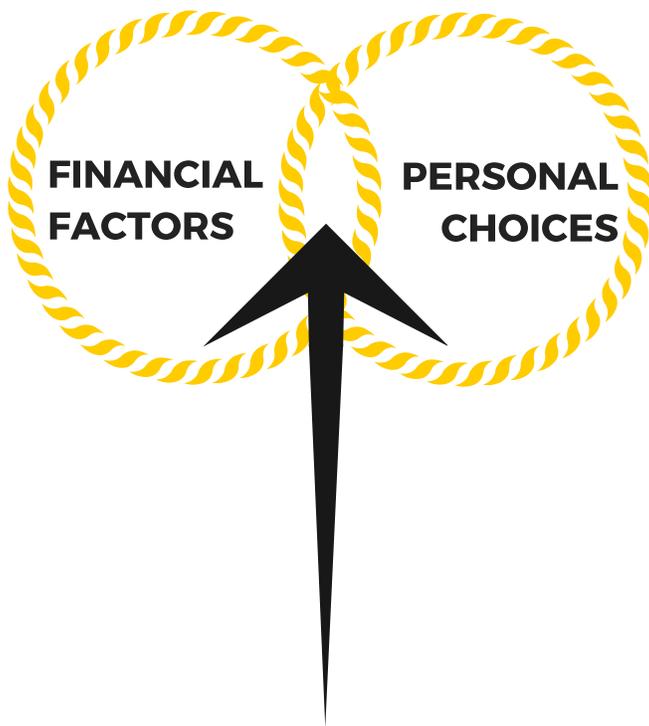


**THIS SERVICE IS
ABOUT TAKING
CONTROL OF
YOUR WEALTH,
NOT LEAVING IT
ON AUTOPILOT**

EXPLANATION AND IDEAS

My planning process is not about me telling you what you should and shouldn't be doing with your money.

You are paying me to help you understand the financial factors involved in your own personal choices.



THE RIGHT DECISIONS

Ultimately, any decision you make is your responsibility, and I can only provide help, guidance, and counsel, enhancing your understanding by making you think about things you may not have considered.

Anything I suggest or propose isn't set in stone. Everything should be on the table and open for discussion.

I will never make a strong recommendation in the way that other financial advisers do.

I am a coach to help you reach the right decisions with your money from a position of improved understanding.

Any financial decision you make will have some advantages and disadvantages to consider. All of these should be considered against your personal views and goals.

We are essentially building your comprehensive financial plan together and a discussion process to understand, discount and consider various options is a crucial step.

Only through building an understanding of your financial situation, will the choices you make be reflective of you taking control of your wealth, rather than leave it in the hands of others.

DIGITAL BROCHURE

Once we have discussed thoughts and options, I will present my plan to you in your digital brochure that will be your personal and comprehensive financial plan that you can keep and refer to.

It's far better to see your financial plan in paper rather than discussed verbally, as terms can be more easily explained, and numbers can be presented in a more visually appealing way (I'm sure you don't want to hear me drone on for hours about money!).

I also work better in writing. My thoughts and ideas can be articulated more clearly, and this method ensures that necessary details are covered and not missed.

An additional benefit of receiving your plan in a digital brochure is that it can be consumed at your leisure, whether that is in bite size chunks, or in its entirety.

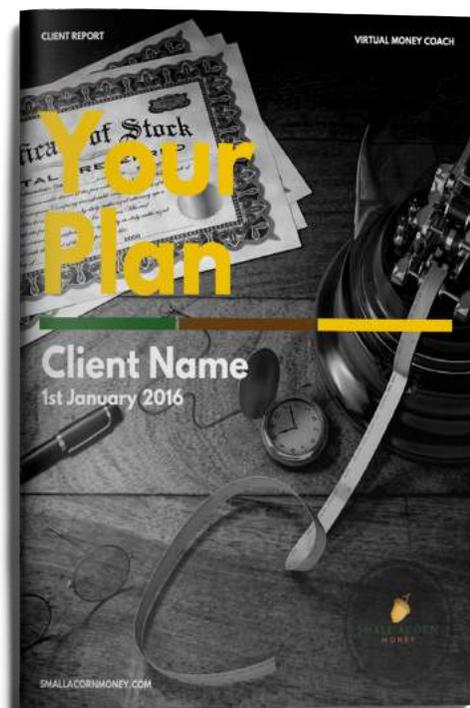
This document also forms the basis of your plan for the future; you can refer to it, use it to review your progress, and make any amendments necessary.

Finally, putting the plan onto paper is a small but very important commitment. It's a little like writing your personal contract.

There will be a section for you to sign that will clearly set out a summary of your goals and the steps necessary to help you achieve them.



Psychologically, this small commitment is the first essential step in what are likely to be many lifestyle, behavioural and financial steps to follow on your path to prosperity.



ONGOING SUPPORT

Your financial plan doesn't end the day you receive your digital brochure.

You shouldn't let it sit in a box gathering dust, or saved to a computer file never to see the light of day.

Getting your finances in order is a crucial first step on your path to prosperity, but it's only really the beginning.

You need to keep your plan to mind on a frequent basis, review your progress towards your important life and financial goals, and rectify deviations from your path.

It also helps having someone lending a hand, and holding you to account against the plans you have made (and hopefully provide a little financial wisdom along the way).

In a similar way to having a personal trainer, having me on hand to discuss your financial progress will make you far more likely to stick to your goals, rather than trying to do it all on your own when life just seems to get in the way.

Let's face it, constantly thinking about money probably isn't natural or healthy, and delegating part of this to someone else who specializes in this field has its merits.

This ongoing service would be separate to my initial financial planning fee of £999. My ongoing support is available for £79 per month, and you can cancel at any time.

You do not need to have ongoing support and financial planning. Signing up for ongoing support is also not a prerequisite for helping you to construct a comprehensive financial plan for the fixed fee of £999.

It is a valuable ongoing service for most people who incorporate comprehensive financial planning into their lives.

As life changes, many find they would like to know they have someone who is truly unbiased and conflict-free, sitting on their side of the table.



Ongoing support will ensure your finances remain on the right path, when constant changes to the financial environment and life generally, affect, alter and impact on the financial plans you have put in place.

YOU'RE IN SAFE HANDS

If you are reading this guide, I assume it is because you need someone to help you with your finances. But why should that someone be me?

There are certain standards to my service that make them superior to alternatives in the marketplace (even if I do unashamedly say so myself). These standards are as follows:

1. Comprehensive

Consider the professionals and people you may come across over the course of your personal financial lives: Solicitor, Accountant, Financial Adviser, Mortgage Broker, Estate Agent, Bank Manager, Stockbroker etc.

Each one is extremely well versed in their subject matter, but they do not tend to consider factors outside their area of expertise and remit – and nor should they.

However this specialised approach ensures that none of them know enough about your overall life and goals to be able to give you truly unbiased advice – their very specialisation tends to create an inherent bias towards the areas within which they are competent.

As an example, an accountant will think of the tax benefits of an investment, perhaps without due consideration and understanding of the financial risks involved.

The tax advantages can blind an accountant to other factors that may well be more important than tax. The old saying '**don't let the tax tail wag the investment dog**' is still frequently forgotten.

Without going through a rigorous and thoughtful financial planning process to build an understanding of your financial position, how do you know if you are truly making the right choices? And how can other professionals make them for you?

The downside of my approach is that sometimes I could be viewed as being '**a jack of all trades and a master of none**'. I'm unlikely to know all of the important details in each field. What is important however, is that you can have someone you can trust to **sit on your side of the table**, working with you, having no ulterior motive, or sales pressures.

I view this approach as akin to visiting your family GP (but you get a lot more time with me than 15 minutes!). They may not know every detail across the medical field. But they have a broad enough understanding, along with an overview of your own personal situation and history to ensure you go to the right people, at the right time.



**THEIR KNOWLEDGE
MAY HAVE
GREAT DEPTH,
BUT IT CAN LACK
SUFFICIENT BREADTH.**

2. Holistic

Having a holistic service means I understand that the different parts of your finances and your personal life are intimately interconnected and explicable only by reference to the whole.

Regarding your financial planning process, it means first and foremost consideration of your personal situation, beliefs, and objectives, before tallying these with all aspects of your finances and coming up with a bespoke and personal strategy for maintaining and enhancing your prosperity.

Most of us specialize nowadays so we can excel at a given topic. However, when it comes to your personal financial plan, you need to ensure that you don't let one factor (e.g. tax) outweigh other factors (such as investment risk) when considering your overall situation and establishing your comprehensive financial plan.

**A COMPREHENSIVE AND
WELL THOUGHT OUT
FINANCIAL PLAN CONSIDERS ALL
FACTORS AS A WHOLE.**

Some factors to consider would be tax, investment risk profile and capacity, return required, product charging, financial understanding, lifestyle, family, personal, life expectancy, income needs, cash flow, leaving a legacy, affordability, etc.

At all times the focus should be on you and your overall strategy – the big picture.

3. Challenging conversations

I have no intention to disagree with you during your financial planning process, however if you do not employ someone willing to have challenging conversations with you, play devil's advocate and outline alternative views to ensure you are certain about your financial choices; then what exactly would be the point of paying for the services of professionals?

You should save on the fees and make your own choices.

Paying for professional advice is often about paying for someone who is prepared to tell you that your 'baby is ugly'. Now, I would never insult anyone's child in that way, but the phrase means if I see something in your finances that should raise alarm, I will sound that alarm, and outline my reasoning behind those concerns.

We can then have constructive discussions and debates about what may be better choices towards your own personal goals, and you can ensure that the decisions you take are truly from a position of full understanding and control.

You'd be surprised how often people say they want a certain goal or say they think a certain way, yet **their finances do not accurately reflect their own goals and views.**

If this happens to be you I will tell you so for **your own financial well-being** (ever so politely of course).

4. Educational

My aim with Small Acorn Money is to **empower people to take control of their own wealth.**

I hope to achieve this through a combination of educational articles, guides, videos, books, digital courses and financial planning.

Hopefully, after spending some time with me, you will feel comfortable and equipped to manage your affairs entirely on your own, or perhaps you can do so in a few years time.

If so, I would be delighted as you will be venturing on your path to prosperity and ensuring you and your family's finances are secure.

This is very different to traditional financial advice. Far too often they resemble asset gatherers than the title they are putting on their business cards. (As an aside, surely this misrepresentation of who they are is fraud? At the very least, the term adviser should come with sarcastic air bunny's, "adviser", to help inform the public that they're not necessarily all they're advertising to be).

Your investments are very valuable to a financial advisory firm over the course of your life. Is it any wonder they make no real effort to help you truly understand? This may seem a little too cynical at first glance, but there have been a number of books, research reports and articles basically bemoaning the inherent conflicts of interest in investment management and financial advisory business structures.

5. Truly unbiased

You pay me an explicit fee to solely work in your best interests. I have no ulterior motive, sales targets, or bag of financial products to sell you.

I am going to pick on the traditional financial advice model to again explain why I feel my financial coaching service is the better option for you.

Too many financial advisers are entirely reliant upon you as a client purchasing a product, or transferring to another provider in order for them to get paid. With this method of earning a living, are you really that surprised when your 'advice' results in needing a new product or provider?



**THE OLD ADAGE,
"YOU DON'T GO TO A BARBERS
AND ASK WHETHER YOU NEED
A HAIRCUT"
COMES TO MIND!**

Financial Advisers advertise they are 'independent' or 'unbiased', yet their operational set-up and charging model is full of conflicts of interest. So whose interests are they working for?

You pay me an explicit and transparent fee to sit on your side of the table, placing myself between you and the self-interest, jargon, noise, and complexity of the financial industry.

Whilst some other financial planners operate this way, it is quite rare to find those who do. I believe there are a few reasons for this.

Firstly, many of the public don't necessarily understand the true value of comprehensive, unbiased and conflict-free financial planning. They don't see what goes on behind the scenes with the traditional financial advisory model, so trust some financial advisers far more than they deserve.

Secondly, most financial advisers don't understand what part of their service is valuable to people, or they don't have confidence in their advice. Far too many are long in the tooth, institutionalized financial salespeople. This may have been okay 20-30 years ago, but the public shouldn't stand for such conflicted nonsense in the 21st century.

If you need to sell your clients something to feed your family, how can you provide truly unbiased and conflict-free financial advice?

Finally, as financial advice is a business, it is there to meet consumer demand.

Many people just wish to delegate financial decisions and control to others. That's fine. But doing so means you have to entrust your future to someone else fully.

My comprehensive financial planning service will require a lot of your personal involvement.



BE AWARE

If you would like to entirely delegate the decisions to someone else then my services are not for you.

6. Remote service

Technology allows me to work from anywhere and remove many of the costs associated with having an office and providing a face-to-face service; **passing these savings onto you by way of lower fees.**

I am a big believer in two things.



**WORK IS A THING YOU DO
NOT A PLACE YOU GO.**

Many years ago we all needed to be in one place to work the fields. Later it was factories, and more recently it is offices.

With the invention of the World Wide Web, and the ability to connect with anyone around the world at a click of a mouse, we can now essentially pick where we would like to live from a lifestyle perspective and still provide high quality work.

THE DEFERRED LIFE PLAN IS A MISTAKE.

I cannot understand why people put off their lifelong dreams until a time when they are going to be in poor health (or possibly even dead). The time to do the things you would like to in life is today – tomorrow might not come.

From a financial perspective, you need to be prudent and plan to live to 100 years of age, but from a lifestyle perspective, it's important to live a little more in the here and now.

From a young age, I have always held a burning, insatiable desire to see the world.

Given the world's present level of prosperity, openness, and technological advancement,

I am fortunate enough to incorporate some form of work/travel balance into my life. It is for these reasons that I am slightly nomadic while providing comprehensive financial planning, writing books, and creating helpful research and learning content for the general public and other financial services professionals around the world.

While I consider England my home, I don't really spend much time there and don't expect to for a good few years yet.

Family is the one thing that will draw me back to England. (let's face it, it's not going to be the weather), but as of writing, you need to be aware that while I am the director and operator of a UK based company, for the most part, I will personally be outside of the UK.

This does raise some legitimate data protection issues that need to be disclosed to you, and more importantly, I need to operate in a secure manner.

There is a separate data protection guide explaining my operational and legal processes thoroughly, and an agreement for you when you sign up for my services.

In short, I take the protection of your data very seriously and only use solutions provided by well-known and reputable businesses to ensure your data is stored and managed securely.

7. Committed to learning

I have studied for a variety of professional financial qualifications. These qualifications would satisfy and exceed the regulatory requirement to provide product related financial advice, and manage client investments on a discretionary basis, among some other regulated financial functions.

They provide me with a broad understanding of the products and techniques used in managing wealth.



PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

- CISI Private Client Investment Advice and Management (Distinction)
- CFA UK Investment Management Certificate
- CII J04 Pension Funding Options
- CII J05 Pension Income Options
- CII J0 Personal Taxation
- CII J06 Investment Principles, Markets and Environment (Merit)
- CII RO1 Financial Services, Regulations and Ethics
- IFS Certificate in Financial Advice
- IFS Certificate in Mortgage Advice and Practice
- IFS Certificate in Regulated General Insurance

Having professional qualifications, combined with my experience, helps me to understand the technicalities of financial advice and financial planning, and yet if I only had this knowledge, I would be largely the same as most other Financial Advisers.

In my view, it is my wider readings that have built my knowledge above and beyond that achievable solely from structured study.

I personally value the vast range of books, blogs and research reports more highly than my professional qualification, yet they don't come with any form of certificate of accomplishment.

My hope is that through my accomplishments and continual learning, I will one day be deemed an authority or expert in financial planning and investment management.

Personally, I will always feel like there is more to learn and more to understand about investing, financial markets and financial planning. With each book, I often find ten more to add to my Amazon wish list.

This commitment to continual learning ensures I will always be searching for improved solutions and a deeper understanding of subjects that apply to financial planning.

8. Sales Free

There will be no sales of financial products and the FCA does not regulate my service. The FCA regulates the sale and promotion of financial products. From experience, in many cases I have found the description 'financial adviser' to be very misleading, when there are many who should be very clearly labelled 'financial promoters'.

This separation from product sales makes me truly unbiased, but I am therefore not regulated by the UK Financial Conduct Authority and will not (and cannot) provide specific product recommendations to you.

Whilst I am financially qualified to a standard exceeding the minimum requirement of the FCA to provide this type of regulated financial advice. I am not particularly interested in providing this service.

**FINANCIAL PLANNING IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN FINANCIAL PRODUCTS.
MY AIM IS TO TEACH YOU HOW TO TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR WEALTH, NOT TO SELL YOU FINANCIAL PRODUCTS.**

I stay 'in the know' on financial products and solutions because I also provide research and reporting services to a few financial planners around the world. I will, therefore, be familiar with what you have and the products available, but my attention will always be on your high-level plan, rather than your financial product details and technicalities.

Let's face it there's enough financial advisers out there doing largely the same thing - what value will I provide if I simply be another one?

TAKE CONTROL TODAY

**DON'T LEAVE YOUR WEALTH IN
SOMEONE ELSE'S HANDS.**

**DON'T LEAVE YOUR
FUTURE TO FATE.**

**IT'S TIME TO
TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR WEALTH.**

**USING MY SERVICES IS THE KEY TO YOUR
LONG-TERM SUCCESS AND
LASTING PROSPERITY.**

Getting started

The first step of your comprehensive financial plan is a brief conversation to ensure we can work together and value can be added to your financial situation and your life. This is at my expense, with no obligation on your part. If you still have any further questions we can discuss them during your call. I do not ask for any payment until you fully understand the process and are 100% comfortable to proceed.

**Today is the day you start matching your money to your life
and take control of your future prosperity.**

CONTACT

mark@smallacornmoney.com

+44 7901 578 462

+44 1256 790 462

Skype: [mark.smallacornmoney](https://www.skype.com/people/mark.smallacornmoney)

www.smallacornmoney.com



**Mark Underdown
Financial Coach**

With Thanks

This guide couldn't have been made possible
without photography and design from:

[Unsplash.com](https://unsplash.com)

[Bloomcreativdesign.com](https://bloomcreativdesign.com)