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MEDIA

The aftershocks of the economic crisis can make it. hard to balance your family's books each month, yet easy steps can improve your finances enormously

Good financial nealth starts here

etting to grips with your famfinances is a challenge at the best of times, but the recession and a tough economic climate are making it much harder for many parents. Help is at hand, if you look for it, from a variety of sources. This supplement, for instance, contains lots of useful information on areas ranging from pensions and financial planning to choosing assets and ethical investments; and the Institute of Financial Planning (IFP), as the independent body dedicated to financial planning, is delighted to support it.

Money worries are bad enough when they affect you as an individual. They are debilitating, energysapping, stressful and all-consuming. But if you have a family to look after, too, financial pressures can



Chief Executive, Institute of Financial Planning

seem even harder to deal with. Yet, as this supplement will show, good Financial Planning is relatively easy to implement and can make a real difference to your monthly budget — and to your life.

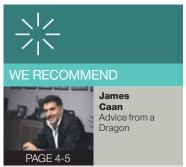
Get peace of mind

This might mean making changes to your lifestyle such as the amount you spend on luxuries and other items — but, ultimately, taking a small step can make a big difference. Good financial health will free you, put you in control and, crucially, give you more peace of mind. Confronting any financial issues you have is the hard part; but, once you do, it is great to know where you stand - and making progress is really motivating!

If you need professional financial help, a Certified Financial Planner professional is qualified to put you on the right course. They can help you understand what you want out of life and help you achieve it; give advice on, for example, buying a new home, planning for your retirement or providing for your children's education.

Otherwise, IFP's Financial Planning Week (Nov22-28) provides $great\,tips, tools\, and\, help\, to\, get\, your$ family more financially 'fit'.

Visit www.financialplanning.org.uk for details and to find a Certified Financial Planner professional in your area.



"Expert knowledge and deployment of capital creates a return"



FAMILY FINANCE 2ND EDITION, SEPTEMBER 2010

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The average cost of raising a child to the age of 21 has smashed through the £200,000 barrier for the first time according to research published by Liverpool & Victoria (The Guardian, Feb 2010).

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Question: What is the best way to maximise the return on your assets?

Answer: Understand the market, your tolerance for investment risk and seek expert advice, says James Caan from TV's Dragons' Den



WHY KNOWLEDGE IS AN **INVESTOR'S BEST ASSET**

LEADER TO LEADER

If you want to know about the art of investing, just ask a Dragon. James Caan — entrepreneur, CEO of private equity firm Hamilton Bradshaw and star of TV's Dragons' Den agrees that the recession has knocked the confidence out of the investment market. Yet he says that where there is uncertainty and volatility, there are also exciting investment opportunities.

An investor's very best asset? It's not stocks, shares or property, he insists. It's knowledge.

Appetite for risk

"Most funds are correlated to the stock market," Caan says "And because the stock market hasn't been doing very well, inevitably people

have lost confidence in investing.

"The counter argument is: What can you do? If you keep your money in cash, it's pretty safe but it's only making 0.5 per cent interest. If you want five, 10 or 15 per cent interest, however, you have to take a greater risk." How you manage your assets depends on your appetite for risk and how much you can afford to lose.

Get the knowledge

The trouble is, in today's market, anything can happen. "The assets we used to think were fairly safe —



Caan entrepreneur, CEO of private equity firm Hamilton Bradshaw and star

have been dramatically affected," says Caan. "The swing on property prices for example has been shocking. And I've seen Blue Chip stock prices move eight or nine per cent in one day." If you do have capital to invest,

however, Caan's advice is don't be put off. If you don't possess any entrepreneurial flair, get an asset manager to invest funds on your behalf; although, he warns, make sure you do your homework and find a

His biggest tip, though, is 'get the knowledge'. Swat up on any potential investment markets before taking the plunge.

Deployment of capital

"For example, If you understand the

like property and Blue Chip stocks property market, I think you can find some very interesting opportunities right now. If you've never traded in property before, however, it's not the time to get in.

> "Plus, currently, there are massive opportunities in art. People aren't buying and they're not investing and therefore prices are down. But you've got to know what you're buying.

> "People say to me: 'James, how do you understand all these different markets and businesses?' The answer is: I don't, actually. If I don't have expertise in a particular area, I find someone who does and team up with them. Expert knowledge and deployment of capital creates a return."

TONY GREENWAY

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Can you afford the loss?

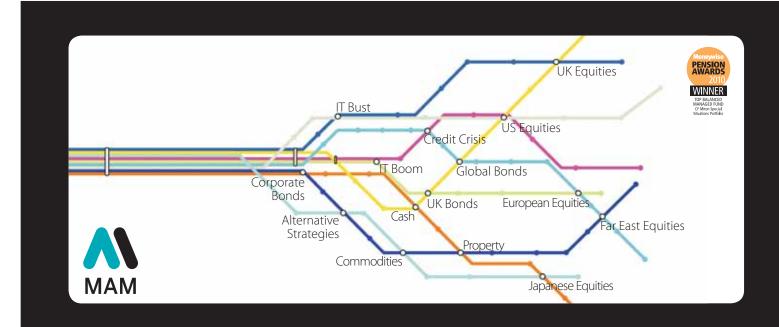
If you have shares which fall 50 per cent, do you sell at that price and take the loss or do you hold on in the hope of a recovery? If you can't afford to lose more than 20 per cent, you should put a stop loss in at that level and get out.

Take the long view

I'm of the view that if I bought something at £100 and it drops to £50, rather than selling I go back in and buy more. Why? Because if I thought it was good value at £100, it's even better value at £50! So I don't panic. Markets are volatile - they go up and they go down.

Find an asset manager

There are lots of asset managers out there. When you are selecting one, don't rely on marketing bumf - and make sure they can absolutely verify their performance.



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Situations Fund	6.4%	13.0%	2.7%	8.9%	13.3%	52.3%	119.7%	271.1%

Source: Financial Express Analytics

igures are Bid/Bid. Figures calculated to 31.8.2010 unless othewise stated. Fund launched 31.12.1997

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MEDIA

INSPIRATION



Planning finances for peace of mind

- Question: What's the best way to keep family finances in check?
- Answer: Keep a detailed tally of outgoings, plan your goals and, if necessary, seek professional financial advice from a qualified expert

HOW WE MADE IT

When it comes to managing family finances, the recession has been a game-changer. With volatile markets and a shaky jobs outlook, saving is the new spending and credit cards are being cut up. A public spending round is coming in October and a VAT hike has been announced for January — so careful scrutiny of your monthly incomings and outgoings has never been more important.

"People are starting to recognise that they have got to save," says Barry Horner, President of the Institute of Financial Planning, the professional financial planning body. "After the excesses we've seen over the last decade or so, they are realising that maximising the amount on their credit cards is dangerous, especially if



Barry Horner
President of the
Institute of
Financial Planning

their circumstances change."

If you are struggling to get your family finances in good order, you need to live by the main clear, effective and blindingly obvious message which any financial expert will give: spend less than you earn. "That sounds basic," says Horner, "but the vast majority of people don't know what they are spending because they don't have a budget. So we'd advise you to write down your outgoings. When people commit everything they spend to paper, it's often quite a shock to them.

"It also reveals that they aren't spending in the areas they want to spend. For example, many people value holidays - but, until they keep a tally of monthly outgoings, don't realise that they've spent £200 on eating out." Writing your spending down can help you prioritise funds. Having a plan and thinking through your short, medium and long-term financial goals is good way to save.

The Institute of Financial Planning points out that individuals may need professional planning help or advice in other areas such as understanding financial products, pensions, tax laws or the benefits system. The amount you pay for a financial planner will vary depending on your needs.

"Sometimes, muddling through your own finances is a bit like trying to fix your own car when you don't have any mechanical skills," says Horner. "There are certain disciplines that a qualified financial planner will take their clients through — and one of these is accountability.

"The process of seeking financial planning help can be a very positive step if people are prepared to make it. Just getting a validation check is a great starting point - as long as you have found a planner who you can trust and who is correctly qualified."

The IFP has a guide on its website on how to find a Certified Financial Planner professional.

www.financialplanning.org.uk

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BARRY HORNER'S FINANCIAL TIPS



Avoid debt

Buy a large flat-screen TV with cash and it'll cost you, say, £600. If you put it on HP, and with additional insurance cover, the same TV will cost you around £1700. So, avoiding debt is really important.

Pay off high interest debt

There's no point in putting money in the building society at the moment and earning 2.5 per cent when you're paying 25 per cent on your credit card. So pay it off.

Build your own emergency fund

Have three to six monthsworth of living expenses on deposit. Most people don't do it, but it's a sound and logical idea. It means that if the washing machine or the car break down you won't have to resort to the high interest levels of your credit card to get them fixed.

Have basic levels of protection

Make sure you have life assurance and critical illness cover. That way, if your circumstances change through no fault of your own, you're covered.

Seek professional planning advice

Financial planners sit down with clients and make sure that the money they have coming in is more than the money they have going out. From that picture, strategic decisions can be made as to how the individual wants their money allocated. Once a person gets that clear in their mind, they can start to prioritise — which gives them a real incentive to save.

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Question: What are green and ethical investments? **Answer:** A range of investment options which take account of environmental and social criteria - and can help you make money while being a force for good

MAKING MONEY — AND A DIFFERENCE

The UK didn't invent the concept tainable investment and finance savers and investors would like to Make a difference of green and ethical investing. Far association. "The idea that you "make money and make a differfrom it: The first ethical fund was launched in Sweden in the mid-1960s; and, in the US, in the early 1970s, a fund was set up to enable investors to avoid all companies sis, people are less willing to say: benefiting from the Vietnam War. 'I will let the professionals get on ment', says Shepherd, is broad. "It's

struck a chord in this country. Recent figures from the Investment Management Association show that net retail sales of ethical funds totalled £98million in the second quarter of 2010, well above the average of the past four quarters.

Invested interest

"The UK has over 25 years' experience with green and ethical investments," says Penny Shepherd, Chief Executive of UKSIF, the sus-

have to make a trade off between ence," if they could do both at the investing ethically and getting a same time. financial return is now out of date.

"And following the financial cri-Still, ethical investments have with managing my money because they know best.' People have more of an interest in how their money is invested." Last year, research from UKSIF - which coordinates National Ethical Investment Week — showed that half of



Chief Executive of

Range of options

an investment philosophy, not a series of products. It's taking account of environmental, social, and ethical criteria in investment, alongside - not instead of - traditional, conventional financial criteria." Today there are ethical and green pension schemes, savings accounts, mortgages and investment funds.

"There is a myth that every investment you make has to be green and ethical," says Penny. "And, of course, if that's what you want to do, then fine.

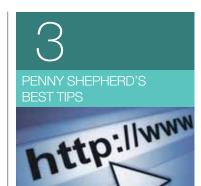
"But a lot of people want to dip their toe in the water to include green and ethical investments as part of their portfolio. It's not an 'all or nothing' proposition. The definition of 'ethical invest- You're still helping to make a

> UKSIF is convinced that ethical investing will become bigger. "Just look at the success of Fair Trade," says Shepherd. "That's gone from one product in a wholefood shop to an entire range which is available pretty much everywhere and chosen by everyone, rather than the deeply committed. That's how we expect green and ethical finance to go."

> > **TONY GREENWAY**







Shop around

For people who want to make investment choices for themselves, we produced a ranking earlier this year identifying the best fund supermarkets for green and ethical stocks and shares ISAs. For more info see: www.uksif.org.

Ask advice

If you are going to invest a significant amount, it makes sense to take independent financial advice. Ask your independent financial adviser about green and ethical investments. There are also advisers who specialise in this area - for example, members of the Ethical Investment Association: www.ethicalinvestment.org.uk

Log-on

The best way to find out information is to visit the National Ethical Investment Week website and click on information for consumers (www.neiw.org).



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The pros and cons of a DIY pension

■ Question: Self Invested Personal Pension Plans offer a wide range of investment opportunities. Are they a good idea?

Answer: Possibly. But you have to understand the investment landscape to get the best out of them.

Apart from battering property prices, the stock market and jobs, the recession has also been pounding away at employers' pension schemes. New - and depressing figures from KPMG show that a third of FTSE 100 companies "cannot ever meet pension fund deficits from current discretionary cash flow."

Taking control of your own pension pot might, therefore, be looking rather attractive right about now. Generally, however, a traditional personal pension gives the plan holder little choice of funds to invest in.

However, a SIPP - or Self Invested Personal Pension Plan - is different. The plan holder can control his or her own investment portfolio (the range of allowable investments includes stocks and shares,



GET YOUR NEST EGG SORTED. With so many funds struggling to meet their pension deficits taking control of your own pension seems more attractive

gilts, overseas securities and commercial property); or they can appoint a fund manager to manage the investments on their behalf.

"SIPP plans are becoming more popular," says Alison Bailey, Head

tary organisation providing inforof the public on all pension mat-

of Policy and Technical Development at the Pensions Advisory Service, the independent volunmation and guidance to members ters. "They give you more flexibility and control over your investments. But SIPPs aren't for your average pension saver. They're really for people who want more sophisticated investing." In short, if you are thinking of going down the SIPP route, you need to understand what you are doing.

And while a SIPP will give you more control it also means that the risks affect you directly because the value of investments held in a SIPP can go down as well as up. Also, owing to the complexity of the product, they may be more expensive than a normal personal pension. The Pensions Advisory Service points out that SIPP providers may impose both a set-up charge and an annual administration fee.

For help and advice in this area, the Pensions Advisory Service should be your first port of call. "If any member of the public needs any help with any pensions issues," says Bailey, "they can come to us via our website and we'll give completely free and independent information and guidance."

TONY GREENWAY

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FACTS

- Before you buy a SIPP, you should consider all the implications to assess if it is the right choice for you.
- To start a SIPP, you'll need to find an HMRC-approved provider (in order to qualify for tax relief from the Inland Revenue). You can find a full

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list of AMPS member providers on the website of the Association of Member Directed Pension Schemes (www.ampsonline.co.uk).

■ **A SIPP** can be started outright or you can transfer funds from another plan.





Has an investment ever looked so attractive?



Buying land through a SIPP could be your best-ever investment

If you're a UK pension plan holder, you can easily convert this into a Self Invested Personal Pension Plan – then start enjoying all the benefits of this more flexible approach to financial planning. One of the most attractive is that it allows you to purchase land overseas as an asset that grows free of UK income and capital gains tax.

Why buy land? Well, the great thing about land is that unlike shares it's a solid tangible asset. What's more, buying land in Crete gives you two great options. Simply leave it undeveloped and wait for it to appreciate in value. Or, have your own property built on it at a low cost by cutting out the developer's margin. Either way, the asset is owned by your SIPP for the purpose of an investment for your future pension income.



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We have spent considerable time perfecting the right formula for UK citizens to purchase plots of land as an investment through their SIPPs – and made history by completing the first ever purchase of land in Crete by this method.

Cretan Life offers an extensive portfolio of land plots in stunning locations in the North West of Crete, all of which are currently available at attractively low prices. Contact us now, and see how Cretan Life is ideally placed to help you unlock the full potential of your pension through a SIPP.

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NEWS



Money running down the drain

■ **Question:** Is there anything that can be done to reduce family water consumption – and lower bills?

■ Answer: Simple behavioural changes can reduce the amount of water we use and bring our bills down

We have, agrees Victoria Higgins of Waterwise, been spoilt. We turn on the tap, water comes out and we let it run down the sink. In the good times, we don't even think about it. In a recession, well, our water bills — indeed all our energy bills — make a big dent in the monthly family finances.

Waterwise is an independent, not-for-profit UK non-governmental organisation which is focused on decreasing water consumption in the UK — and its statistics make worrying reading.

Unsustainable

According to Waterwise, the UK has less available water per person than most other European countries, and each person in the country currently uses about 150 litres of water every day. Our water usage has been ris-



Victoria Higgins Waterwis

ing by one per cent since 1930 — a level which is not sustainable in the long-term.

"Of the 150 litres each person uses every day," says Higgins, "a third is wasted. That's 50 litres. Yet if we can adopt changes in behaviour to optimise water in our homes and businesses, we can reduce wastage."

A running tap uses six litres of water a minute while a hosepipe uses as much as 1000 litres per hour. A bath typically uses around 80 litres

FACTS

- The Energy Saving Trust estimates that over 25% of the average household heating bill is spent on heating water, which costs approximately £200 per year.
- Energy Saving Trust figures state that around 35% of homes in England and Wales are now currently on a water meter.

— but a short shower can use as little as a third of that amount (watch your power shower usage, however, says Waterwise). The Energy Saving Trust estimates that if everybody in a four person family replaced one bath a week with a five minute shower,£10 a year would be saved on energy bills and up to £25 on water bills (if they had a water meter).

In control

Having a water meter installed can make a real difference, says Higgins. "Water meters are a fair way to pay because a householder is only charged for the water used. It puts you in control of your bill." Look on your water company website, says Higgins, or ring them directly and ask for a meter.

Plus, think about your water usage - and water heating. "Energy and water are intrinsically linked," says Higgins. "A lot of energy is used to pump and treat the water which is supplied to our homes; but there's also the energy households use to heat water for the shower or for washing up."

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Take a shower

■ There are changes in behaviour we can all adopt to save water and reduce our bills, such as swapping a bath for a short shower or cutting a minute off your shower. Wash up in a washing-up bowl rather than under a running tap, and turn the tap off when you are brushing your teeth.

Energy-efficient products

■ Products such as water-saving shower heads are available on the market. Aerated shower heads, for example, restrict water flow but maintain pressure by mixing air in with the water.



Look for the marque

Waterwise runs the Waterwise Marque scheme, recommending products which reduce water wastage or raise the awareness of water efficiency. More than 65 products are listed. Visit: www. waterwise.org.uk.

Nordic Eco Shower



Simple solutions to help you save more. Our water saving devices offer you an easy way to significantly reduce your water and energy consumption. The result is cost savings without compromising performance.

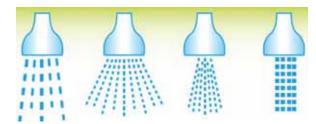
How it works

Nordic Eco Shower has a specially designed inner turbine chamber. Until now, showerheads delivered water through multiple holes in jet streams. The unique design of Nordic Eco Shower mimics nature by creating large well-sized droplets, delivered through repeated propulsions from the central chamber. The heads contain no moving or removable parts, resulting in a strong, durable showerhead. The showerhead is easy to fit and will fit most standard showers. Our unique pricing means that your investment will be recouped very quickly.

Suitability

The Nordic Eco Shower is suitable for mains pressure or pumped showers and all types of hose and cradle. Gravity-fed showers using cisterns in lofts are unlikely to give the required pressure of 0.5bar. Not suitable for electric showers.

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Adjusting the head changes the jet pattern of the water leaving the shower. You may choose between soft large drops, strong jets, or a rapidly pulsating massage jet.

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What our customers are saying

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S. Kay, Managing Director, Cambridge Water PLC.

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PANEL OF EXPERTS



Anita Monteith Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales Tax Faculty



Richard Farleigh Entrepreneur and former Dragons' Den star



Peter Cook
Outreach Manager,
Financial Ombudsman Service



Question 1:

What are the mistakes most commonly made by people when it comes to organising their monthly family finances? The key ones are missing credit card payment deadlines; not paying by direct debit (which saves money because it's cheaper); not planning ahead for expenditure in the next month and not setting aside enough money for tax bills. People don't plan ahead to avoid unauthorised overdrafts or annual bills such as house insurance.

Probably the worst mistake is to not to have a clear idea of the expenses that will come in. Write them all down and know the monthly totals. And it's just as important to look at the whole calendar year or school year to help come up with a budget. Months can be lumpy, so a year view is best.

Many people are not fully aware of what goes in - and out - of their account each month. If you don't check your statements regularly problems can quickly mount up. It's much easier to get things sorted out if you tell your bank as soon as you're aware that something has gone wrong.

Question 2:

What one thing can people do immediately to improve their monthly accounts?

Organisation is key when it comes to keeping on top of your monthly accounts and it pays to know where everything is. So start a list of your outgoings and incomings and keep all receipts in a file in one place so you don't lose them around the house.

That way it's much easier to keep a tab

Obviously paying off any credit cards on time avoids the tough interest bills. Also, it's easy to underestimate how much things cost over a period of time. Cigarettes, newspapers and other items that seem small can add up to quite a bit over a year. If you keep a rough record of what you spend, you might decide to cut some things.

Give your finances a review. Check any regular payments (such as direct debits or standing orders) out of your account. Cancel any that you don't need and be aware of what you pay out each month. Interest rates change so it's worth reviewing what the rate is on any bank accounts, credit cards or loans you might have.

Question 3:

If people are in debt, what steps should they take to amend their situation?

Don't put it off because

it won't go away. Steel yourself to add up all your debts and look at the real total. Don't hide it from your spouse or partner but tackle it as a family, and sort out priority debts first. See a debt adviser but DO NOT use a fee charging debt advice service - you'll just be throwing away more money. It may be a good idea to cut back on spending and pay off the debt as fast as possible. Move the debt to a lower interest lender, such as by borrowing more against the home to pay off the credit cards. If your parents are getting tiny interest on their savings while you're paying more than 10% on your card, do a deal and pay them, say, five. You both win.

Don't ignore it! If you're experiencing financial difficulties tell your bank, loan company or other finance firm in the first instance. If they are aware of the problem, they should try and work with you to look at possible solutions. If you've made a complaint and remain unhappy, the Financial Ombudsman Service might be able to help.



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Peter Neal Pensions: helping you Prosper

Peter Neal Pensions is a family-run firm of independent financial advisers. It is also a respected pensions specialist which has created its own ground-breaking, one-of-a-kind SIPP which has set the industry talking.

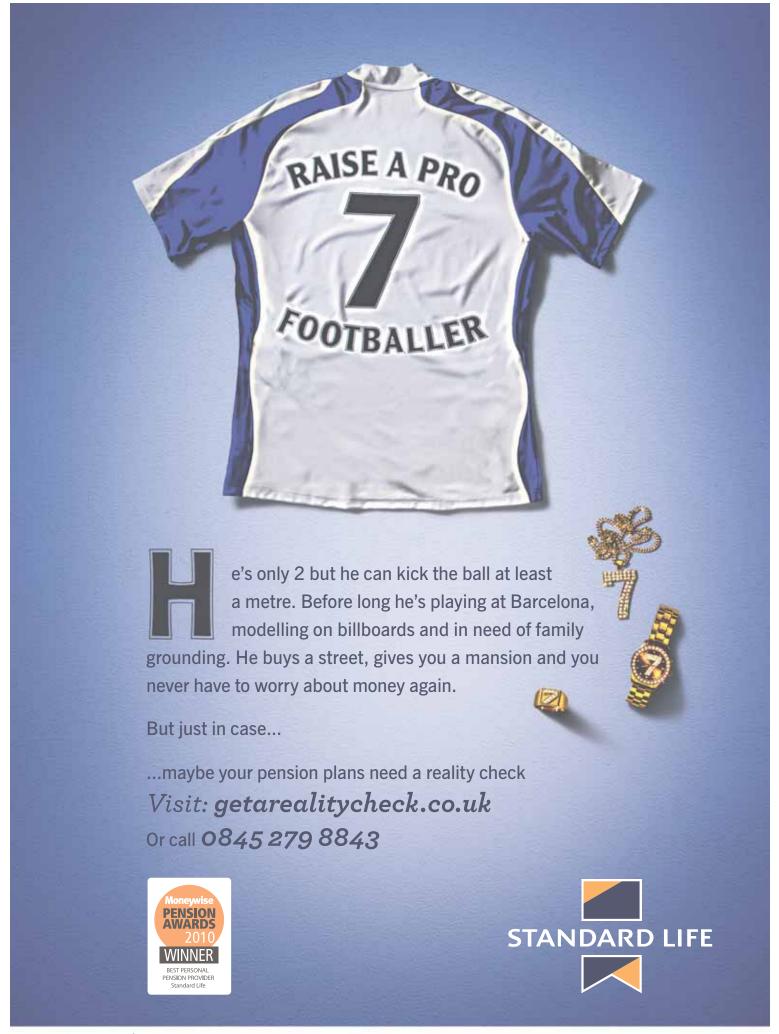
"ProsperSIPP is a one stop retirement plan that is versatile, flexible and tax efficient," says MD Peter Neal. "Uniquely, it has a twin SIPP feature which allows investors to automatically move assets and money between two platforms. No other SIPP plan in the UK offers this."

The extra deals included in the ProsperSIPP plan make it stand out from the pensions crowd. Plus, its low-cost and transparent charging structure gives it some of the best ratings in the market, even when compared to more basic SIPP plans.

Here is what you can include in your retirement plan;-

- Commercial property purchase as a specialisation
- Funds supermarket platform at discount rates or choose one of our model portfolios
- Discretionary Fund Management at market leading charges
- Specialist Funds including a money back guarantee at 5 years
- Cash Deposits with a 4% rate for a 5 year plan with no risk whatsoever
- Share dealing at low charges
- No investment restrictions (subject to HMRC regulations) including unlisted shares and loans.
- Group SIPP commercial property purchase for families or business
- A 5 star Defaqto rating, the highest available in the market
- Tax efficient phased retirement for variable tax free payments and income withdrawal

Call us now on: 0208 777 6777 • Email: enquiries@prospersipp.com • www.prospersipp.com
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