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Financial protection – for you and your family



Protecting what matters most

Life and health insurance protection is the underpin of most good financial planning. These types of insurance can ensure that if the worst should happen, the right amount of money will reach the right hands at the right time.

There are three main forms of protection to consider:

- Life insurance – making sure that those left behind have funds after the death of a parent or some other person with dependants;
- Health insurance – making sure that you have enough money if you fall seriously ill; and
- Medical insurance – making sure that you have access to the best medical treatment when it is needed.

This guide gives a brief insight into the importance of financial protection and the different forms of protection to consider.

Life insurance needs

Life insurance puts money in the hands of those who need it when a person dies. There are many reasons why this money might be needed, including:

- Paying off a mortgage (or other loan) if a borrower dies.
- Protecting a family against the early death of a spouse, partner or parent, particularly important for people with financial responsibility for children.
- Paying for a funeral.
- Paying inheritance tax (IHT).
- Protecting a business against the financial consequences of the loss of its owner or a key employee.

If your income would stop upon your death, and you have people who depend on you financially, you should have life insurance cover. If you live with a spouse or partner and their earnings would also stop at death, they too should have insurance cover. However, if you do not have financial dependants, it is unlikely that you will need life assurance.

Quantifying the need for life insurance

The life assurance needed to cover a loan is relatively simple to assess. You need enough insurance for the amount of the loan and the cover should last for the time that the loan is outstanding. If you pay off some of the loan, you should be able to reduce the amount of cover earmarked for this purpose. But most people also need insurance cover to replace their income if they were to die. The same principles apply but the calculations are a little more complicated. For example, you decide you need life assurance cover to provide the school fees for a child who is now five and will probably be in school until she is 18. You should therefore first quantify the total amount of school fees that you would have to pay over the period and take out cover of this amount for the next 13 years.

The approach to insuring other needs is roughly the same. For example, you could calculate how much your family would need to cover the general household and other expenses and how long they would need the funds.



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The payout on life insurance might be a lump sum or a regular income. If it is a regular income, a decision needs to be made on how long income is payable.

You can arrange for life cover to pay out a series of annual amounts over a set period, which is a simple approach to replacing an annual income. But most life cover pays out a lump sum. If you want a lump sum to provide £1,000 a year for 10 years, you would need life cover of about £10,000; if the income were needed for 20 years, you would need about £18,500 because the invested lump sum would produce some growth and income.

It is sometimes hard to work out how much life cover you would require overall for your family, because of the difficulties of assessing your family's needs after one or both parents have died. Current levels of expenditure provide a good starting point for making these estimates, and then you would have to consider the other costs that might be involved like child-care. It can be especially difficult to assess the potential financial impact of the death of a parent who spends most of their time looking after children and the household. A good starting point is to estimate the costs of buying in these services.

The right life insurance policies for you

Term assurance, sometimes called temporary insurance, is the right sort of cover for most types of family protection needs. It provides insurance at the lowest cost for the period that it is required.

It is rare that you would need other types of life insurance for family protection, because they generally involve much higher costs than term assurance to provide comparable levels of cover. Whole of life assurance provides cover for the whole of your life, as the name implies and its main use is in inheritance tax planning and provision for funeral expenses. Endowment policies are essentially savings products with some added life assurance and they can be used for repaying mortgages, although they are much less widely sold than they were in the past. Both whole life and endowment policies can have substantial investment values that you can cash, unlike term assurance policies.

Term insurance is the simplest form of life insurance, working in a similar way to your house insurance. The policy will pay out if you die during the term, but if you survive to the end of the term, the contract simply ends and there is no pay-out.

The cost of life assurance varies considerably according to your age and state of health. The cost of 10 year term assurance for a 30 year old is about a tenth of the same cover for a 60 year old. A person's state of health is also very important; poor health could mean increased premiums or even the possibility that the individual cannot be insured. Although term assurance is a simple product, there are variations that suit different needs:

Level term These policies pay out a fixed sum if you die during the term of the policy.

Renewable or convertible term Some policies are renewable, so that you can extend them for an additional period of cover at the end of the term regardless of your state of health at the time, while others are convertible to a whole of life or endowment policy regardless of your health. These policies cost more than level term assurance.

Increasing term Some policies have an element of inflation proofing. You either have the option to increase the cover from time to time by a set percentage, or in some cases, the amount of cover increases automatically by a set percentage or perhaps the rate of inflation. These policies also cost more than level term assurance.



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If you are not in paid work, you can get income protection on a limited basis.

Decreasing term This is like level term but the amount of cover reduces each year. Decreasing term is typically used to cover a liability that you expect to decrease year on year, such as paying school fees until a child reaches the age of 18. The cost of this cover is less than level term assurance because the overall amount of insurance provided over its lifetime is lower.

Mortgage protection This is a type of decreasing term assurance but the cover reduces in line with the outstanding capital on a repayment mortgage where you pay off some of the capital every month. The higher your mortgage interest rate, the more slowly the outstanding mortgage capital falls each year. It is important to ensure that the interest rate specified in the policy matches the mortgage it is intended to cover or that the rate is higher than the interest rate you expect at any time during your mortgage.

Family income benefit This type of policy pays an annual sum if you die during the term of the policy and the payments continue until the end of the term. Family income benefit can provide the highest initial cover for the lowest cost because it is effectively a form of decreasing insurance.

For example, Mark has twin children, aged 5. He wants to ensure that if he died, the family would be protected until the twins reach 21. He feels they would need £30,000 a year for this and takes out a family income benefit policy to cover the liability. If he were to die in year one, the policy would pay £30,000 a year for 16 years – a total of £480,000. If he were to die two years before the end of the term, it would pay £60,000 in total.

Life cover from your pension scheme If you are employed, you may well have life cover from your employer and you should generally take this cover into account when deciding how much insurance you need. It is usually worth considering this type of cover because it is very inexpensive, largely due to its tax advantages.



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By age 80, there is about a 1 in 5 chance of needing care. You could qualify for some state/local authority help, but this is means-tested. It is possible to buy insurance in advance of needing care.

Relevant life policies Employers can take out these policies on the lives of employees. They are not part of their pensions, but they have many of the same tax advantages.

Joint life policies There may be situations where you could take out a policy on more than one life. The policy could then pay out after both the insured people have died – sometimes used for inheritance tax planning. Alternatively, the policy might be arranged so that it pays out when the first of the insured people dies. That would mean however, that the second person would then no longer be covered by the policy after the first of the couple dies.

Ensuring the right people get the money

The best way to ensure that the proceeds of a life policy are paid the people you intend to benefit is generally to arrange for the policy to be in a trust. The most appropriate type of trust is generally one that gives the trustees discretion or flexibility about how they distribute the benefits, but it is a good idea to get advice about this. If you die, the policy proceeds will then be paid to the trustees and then the beneficiaries not into your estate. This arrangement should save inheritance tax and speed up the payment to the beneficiaries.

There are other ways to set up life policies. The person you want to benefit could take out the policy – so-called life of another basis. In some circumstances, this can be a wise arrangement especially if the potential beneficiary wants to be certain that

the premiums on the policy are being paid. But mostly it is preferable to arrange for a policy to be in trust.

Health Insurance

The purpose of health insurance is to provide some money if you fall seriously ill or have an accident, potentially affecting you for many years. In this case, you would probably stop earning although your financial needs might well be greater than ever. The state benefits you would receive would be relatively low and would be most unlikely to provide sufficient income to meet your needs, especially if you have substantial rent or mortgage payments to make. You might also need capital, for example to make adaptations to your home or to pay off loans or other liabilities.

Virtually everyone who is working needs some kind of health insurance to provide financial protection if their earnings are affected by serious illness or disability. Even if you have no financial dependants, there is a very strong chance that you will need health insurance.

Income protection insurance

Income protection – sometimes called permanent health insurance – pays a weekly or monthly income if you cannot work because of illness or disability. You may think that you do not need to worry about this kind of cover, but the fact is that in the UK there are over 11 million people with a limiting long term illness, impairment or disability and 1 in 7 working age adults suffer from a disability.

You can generally be insured to receive a benefit of up to about half to two-thirds of your pre-tax income. If you have no income, you may still be able to take out a policy, but the maximum payout will be limited, generally to an income of about £20,000 a year.

Some employers provide income protection insurance, but a very large number do not. Employers are only legally obliged to pay employees for the first 28 weeks of their being unable to work because of an illness or injury, and even then they do not have to pay the full salary. It is worth specifically checking the position with your employer. If your employer provides cover, the benefits generally continue to be subject to income tax and national insurance, at least initially, but the premiums are usually not taxed as a benefit in kind. If you take out the cover yourself, the benefits are tax free but you do not get tax relief on the premiums.

Income protection insurance pays after a waiting period on each claim, and can continue to pay you up to retirement age. The cover normally lasts until you are aged 60 or 65, but you can arrange the insurance for much shorter periods – say five or ten years and this cover is much cheaper because it is substantially less valuable. The chances of having a serious illness or disability increase substantially as you grow older.

Exclusions It is always worth checking conditions and exclusions on income protection insurance policies for example if the illness is caused by drugs or alcohol abuse. Policies vary to some extent between different insurance companies. Almost all illnesses are generally included in the cover, but most have a few excluded illnesses. There is also an important difference between being covered for being unable to work at your own occupation and cover for being unable to work at ANY occupation. It is much better to have the first type of cover, even though it is likely to be the



Focus point

It is important to look at your options – what do you need most now? How much cover do you need? Can you defer some cover until a future date?

more expensive. Even if you cannot work at your own occupation, under the wider definition the insurer could insist on your undertaking some other work.

Insurers will generally only pay a proportion of your recent earnings as benefits, which can be hard for people who are self employed or have fluctuating earnings.

Inflation protection It is normally advisable for income protection insurance to be inflation protected in two main ways. You should be able to increase the level of cover from time to time regardless of your state of health, or the cover should increase automatically in line with inflation or some fixed percentage. But it is also important to make sure that the benefit payments themselves keep pace with inflation. Otherwise if the benefit payments never increased after you fell ill and could not work, their real value would be gradually eroded over the years.

Underwriting Insurers are careful when people first apply for income protection insurance. If you have a health issue, the insurance company may exclude the particular problem, or they may increase the premium or possibly decide not to insure you. Insurers also pay considerable attention to your occupation. You will get the best terms if you work in an office, mostly indoors and do little or no manual work. The cover is much more expensive for people who work with machinery or in relatively hazardous places like factories and farms.

Claiming If you have to make a claim under the policy, the insurance company will continue to pay you the benefit until you are well enough to return to work. Then if your illness recurs, they should start paying the benefit again. Unsurprisingly they will want to check from time to time that claimants are genuinely incapacitated.

Income protection can appear relatively expensive, but it is very valuable if you fall seriously ill.

Critical illness insurance

Critical illness insurance pays a lump sum if you are diagnosed as suffering from a specified illness. Over 30 conditions may be covered, including some forms of serious cancers, heart attack and stroke.

The advantage of critical illness insurance is the benefit is paid very early, at diagnosis of the illness, without any significant delay – unlike the waiting period of income protection. It is also in the form of a lump sum that can allow you to make rapid adjustments to your lifestyle and pay off loans. The main drawback is that this type of health insurance only covers a limited set of conditions. These are common disabilities, but critical illness insurance generally does not cover some important conditions, such as most mental illnesses.

People often take out critical illness insurance to cover a mortgage or other loan. Because you are more likely to have a critical illness than die, it is more expensive than life insurance. But this reflects the likelihood of needing to claim on the policy.

Critical illness is an important and valuable addition to income protection, but it should not normally be regarded as a replacement for it.

Accident, sickness and unemployment insurance

Accident, sickness and unemployment (ASU) insurance pays monthly income for up to one or two years only if you cannot work because of illness, disability or



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Income protection is relatively expensive, but it is very valuable if you fall seriously ill.

unemployment. Some policies pay off any loan if you die. People often take out ASU insurance in conjunction with a loan. Policies usually last for the term of the loan or up to retirement age. The unemployment part of the insurance is generally limited to employees; so self-employed people should not take out this part of the cover.

Medical Insurance

The final area to consider is medical insurance. These are policies that help you to afford the cost of private medical treatment.

Private medical insurance (PMI) pays for private health treatment. Depending on your budget, you choose what you want covered – just in-patient or day-patient treatment, or out-patient consultations and medical tests. PMI pays for the treatment of acute conditions only. It does not cover chronic conditions and pre-existing conditions may also be excluded.

Health cash plans pay for everyday health costs, typically 75% – 100% of costs for dentistry, optical and consultation costs, plus a small sum for each day spent in hospital, subject to an annual limit. Other dental options include capitation and maintenance plans, which are agreed with your dentist and cover likely costs over the next year. Dental insurance is also available. Plans may be subject to an initial waiting period to stop people taking out cover for known treatment, then cancelling the policy.

How we can help

Insurers are constantly looking at new ways to meet people's needs, such as through life insurance that includes critical illness and/or income protection insurance, which may be cheaper. It is important to look at your options – what do you need most now? How much cover do you need? Can you defer some cover until a future date? We can recommend the right policy which will be set up in the most effective and economical way, our role is to do three things:

1. **Know enough about you to make the right recommendations.** We carry out a factfind – taking account of facts, your preferences and views. We don't expect you to be an expert on life insurance, but we need to know your attitude to risk. Whether for example, you accept premiums may rise – or want a guaranteed solution.
2. **Help you to identify priorities.** If you were insured against absolutely everything, like most people you may find premiums unaffordable. Working out how things might change in future and prioritising matters could be a sensible thing to do.
3. **Recommend solutions to meet your needs.** The right policy is important, but a will or writing policies in trust could be too.

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