



# Helping make the right choice

➤ **Ensuring individuals make the most of their pension money often does not just improve their quality of life in a financial sense, but in an emotional way too. *Pensions Age* asked for your memorable stories of helping savers make the best choices with their retirement savings**

**A** really important part of being a financial adviser is knowing when you are needed, tapping into the life and emotions in helping, in even the toughest of times, to create and evidence informed decisions.

We have an example, it is heart-rending. It arose because we were the appointed retirement adviser.

Mrs J was not of retirement age, she was introduced to us because as she walked through life, with all the usual challenges, real tragedy had occurred.

Mrs J was the main earner for her family, husband and two young children. Recently she had suffered a cancer scare, but furlough had helped recovery and she was back at work; everything was

apparently under control.

Then after one set of irregular tests and a meeting with a consultant came the worst news imaginable. It is early December, she is unlikely to make it to Christmas. Next destination, the hospice.

All those emotions, these children are going to be without their mum as they grow up.

Then along comes the practical, money is always there.

No time for despair, for preparing her children, for time so precious – with her family, so much to do.

Her employer asked us to help. We had transfer values and pension quotes quicker than you would have believed possible. We knew the scheme like the 'back of our hand'.

For Karen, our adviser, Covid was not going to stop her helping and so into the hospice she went. We cannot describe how emotional this was for everyone.

Mrs J died within two weeks, but

with hard work from all everything was in order in a matter of days.

We did not hear anything for some time, but when we did we got the following feedback from Mr J: *"I want to say thank you. The way you worked did not simply help with the money, it meant that in the lead up to my wife's passing she spent her time with me and the kids, knowing she had everything organised. She knew her time was limited, but with your help she had been able to ensure she would leave a little bit of her love every day, providing for our children's future in a way they will know, see and feel. Mine too."*

**WPS chief executive officer, Simon Chrystal**

A couple of years ago, we conducted a series of one-to-one meetings with members of a large company pension scheme. The reason was to ensure that members understood changes that were being made to their pension benefits.

In a classic *Sliding Doors* moment we saw two members who started at the company on the same day. One had joined the pension scheme immediately having been influenced by his father to make sure he took advantage of the excellent pension scheme that was available. He took his father's advice and sat before us was a member who was able to retire early and enjoy a very comfortable income to live in retirement the way he desired.

The other member told a very different story. When he joined the business he was told by a colleague that the pension scheme was a waste of time. It was the company's money and they'd never see a penny of it in the future. This member therefore only joined the pension scheme when automatic enrolment was introduced.

This time, sat before us, was a member who would have to work until at least state pension age to even consider having enough income to retire.

That specific influence on our

members had sealed both of their fates from day one.

We must be aware not only of what we tell members but also the massive impact that other, sometimes uninformed influencers can have on someone's long-term future.

**Gallagher director retirement communications, Karen Bolan**

We had a member of the DB scheme who, unfortunately, had a massive heart attack on holiday. They were outside of UK at the time, which was helpful as the medical treatment that saved their life was not available in the UK.

On return they investigated taking an ill-health pension, but me and the chair of trustees gently nudged him in the direction of IFA, given the circumstances. They ended up

transferring their DB scheme to a DC arrangement on an impaired life annuity and they got a much higher pension (and contingent spouse's benefit) as a result.

The individual was very happy about the outcome and that story has stayed with me over the years. It reminds me that a DB pension is brilliant for most...but not always the best. Also, it highlights the importance of a good IFA and a bit of pension knowledge (or more importantly the risks of a lack of pension knowledge and a bad – if there is such a thing – IFA). And most importantly, there are real people and families underneath the headline stories.

**CooperVision director of reward, APAC & EMEA, Phil Rixon**

**Written by Laura Blows**

