Hanbury Wealth Product Guide

Personal Pension Plan

CITYWIRE

NEW MODEL
ADVISER TOP 100
2024 WINNER

Created: 27th November 2024

Personal pension plan

What is it?

Personal Pension Plans (PPP) have now been around since mid-1988. They were introduced by the UK government to enable the self-employed, and employees working for companies not operating a group pension scheme, to build up a pension fund for retirement.

PPPs are money purchase schemes with contributions receiving tax relief. An employer may contribute to an individual's PPP. PPPs can move with individuals when they change jobs.

Eligibility

To be eligible to invest in a PPP and receive tax relief on personal contributions, an individual investor must be under 75 years of age and resident in the UK (there are some exemptions for individuals who work for the UK Government or have left the UK in the last few years).

Contributions can also be made by your employer or a third party, for example parent or spouse.

Contribution limits

The minimum contribution will vary between providers but is usually around £20 per month, contributions can be stopped at any time.

Given the many tax advantages that are available with regard to funding a personal pension there are limits to the tax-relievable contributions that can be paid. Individuals are able to make contributions of up to the greater of £3,600 or 100% of their annual earnings to all of their pensions each tax year and receive tax relief on them.

There is an annual limit on the total amount of pension contributions that each person can make without incurring a tax charge (this includes employer and employee contributions). This is called the Annual Allowance. Where the total employer and / or individual contribution exceeds the Annual Allowance a tax charge will apply. The rate of tax will be determined by your taxable income in the tax year. For the current tax year the Annual Allowance has been set at £60,000. However, it may be possible for contributions in excess of the Annual Allowance to be paid in some circumstances under the rules which allow unused Annual Allowance from the three previous tax years to be brought forward and added to the current year's Annual Allowance.

Individuals who have adjusted income (income plus employer pension contributions) for a tax year of greater than £260,000 will have their annual allowance for that tax year restricted. It will be reduced, so that for every £2 of income over £260,000, their annual allowance is reduced by £1.

The maximum reduction will be £50,000, so anyone with income of £360,000 or more will have an annual allowance of £10,000. High income individuals caught by the restriction may therefore have to reduce the contributions paid by them and / or their employers or suffer an annual allowance charge.

The tapered reduction doesn't apply to anyone with threshold income (income less personal / employee pension contributions) of no more than £200,000.

Taxation

Contributions to Personal Pensions generate direct tax savings. Contributions are made net of basic rate tax relief, which means that you will only actually contribute £80 net for every £100 of contributions paid. Higher and additional rate taxpayers likewise make contributions net of basic rate tax and can then claim additional relief via their Inspector of Taxes / Self-Assessment return.

Your pension contributions once made will be invested in funds where there is no liability to tax on capital gains and where all forms of investment income are also tax free. Your money may therefore grow faster in a Personal Pension than in most other forms of investment.

An employer is able to contribute and receive corporation tax relief on any amount that their local Inspector of Taxes is satisfied meets the 'wholly and exclusively for the purposes of the business' test.

All statements concerning the tax treatment of products and their benefits are based on our understanding of current tax law and HM Revenue and Customs' practice. Levels and bases of tax relief are subject to change.

Withdrawals

The earliest age upon which you can take benefits is age 55. The minimum age will increase to 57 from 2028 with further increases expected as the State Pension Age goes up.

At retirement you have the option to take up to 25% of the fund as a tax free cash lump sum, the remaining funds will be taxed as income at your marginal rate(s) of income tax.

There is now no upper age limit by which retirement benefits must be taken.

There are no restrictions on people's ability to draw down from their defined contribution pension pots after age 55 (57 from 2028), this will allow flexible access to your pension savings.

This means there is no particular product that you must purchase or invest in when accessing your savings. It will be up to you to decide how you want to access them, either as a lump sum or through some sort of financial product.

Before 6 April 2023, if the total value of your pension benefits exceeded the 'Lifetime Allowance' the excess benefits were subject to a tax charge of up to 55%. The Lifetime Allowance charge no longer applied from 6 April 2023 and the lifetime allowance has been completely abolished from 6 April 2024. Instead, there are two new limits relating only to the amount of lump sum benefits that can be taken tax free, either during lifetime or on death. For most people the Lump Sum Allowance is £268,275 and this is the limit on the amount of tax free lump sums that can be taken during lifetime (at any age) and the Lump Sum and Death Benefit Allowance is £1,073,100 which covers tax free lump sums paid during your lifetime (at any age) and following your death if before age 75. If you have lifetime allowance protection, your limits will be higher. Any lump sum benefits that exceed available allowances are subject to income tax on the recipient.

Payment on death

The value of the pension fund is available to your beneficiaries on your death and can normally be withdrawn as a lump sum or left within the pension wrapper to be drawn on to provide a regular or ad-hoc income – further details are contained in the accompanying literature.

Death benefits, whether drawn as a lump sum or income, are normally payable free from income tax to your beneficiaries if you die before age 75 (in the case of lump sum death benefits, assuming they are within your available Lump Sum and Death Benefit Allowance – any excess would be subject to income tax on the beneficiary). If you die after age 75, death benefits withdrawn as a lump sum or income are taxable on the recipients as earned income.

Most pensions are currently free from inheritance tax. For deaths after 5 April 2027 the government intends that most pension death benefits will form part of the deceased’s estate.

Pension credit

Pension Credit is a State benefit that provides additional income to pensioners on a means tested basis.

The guarantee credit, available from State Pension Age, tops up weekly income to a prescribed level (£218.15 (for single people) or £332.95 (for couples – living together, not necessarily married) in 2024/25.

There used to be a savings credit element of pension credit but that was abolished for those reaching state pension age after 5 April 2016 (unless your spouse / civil partner had reached state pension age before 6 April 2016 and was already in receipt of savings credit).

The guaranteed element of pension credit will remain as a last resort for those who need it.

By the mid-2030s, the government estimates that over 80 per cent of people reaching their State Pension age will receive the full new state pension which is set above the level at which Guarantee Credit would be payable. This means that the number of people eligible for Pension Credit will reduce over time.

If your estimated income in retirement means that you could be eligible for Pension Credit this might mean that some or all of the benefits from this pension plan are merely replacing income that you would have received via Pension Credit anyway.

The qualifying age for Pension Credit is gradually increasing as State Pension Age increases. It reached age 66 for all in 2020 and will have reached age 67 for all by 2028 with a further increase to at least age 68 expected in future.

Risk considerations

There are a number of risk considerations that need to be taken into account. It is important that you are aware of these.

- The illustration uses certain assumed rates of growth, as prescribed by the Financial Conduct Authority.
- The figures used within the illustration are only examples and are not guaranteed.

- What you will get back depends on how your investments grow and on the tax treatment of the investment.
- The value of your pension fund can go down as well as up and the value will depend on how much is saved, the charges paid and the rate at which the investment grows.
- Past performance is no guarantee of future returns.
- There is no guarantee that the performance of your investment will achieve the growth rate required.
- If growth is low, charges may eat into the capital invested.
- Any employer contribution to your plan is dependent upon the continued solvency of your employer.
- In the event that your employment status changes, it is important that your retirement planning is reviewed.
- Depending how it is taken, your pension income may also depend on interest and annuity rates at the time you retire.
- This investment is intended as a long-term investment and under current HM Revenue & Customs' practice it is not normally possible to access the fund(s) prior to the age of 55, or 57 from 2028.
- The current tax treatment and annual contribution limits may change in the future.
- Please be aware that there may be occasions when an individual fund or funds may have a higher risk rating than your overall stated attitude to risk. If this is the case, then the overall risk rating applied to all of the combined funds recommended will still be designed to meet your stated tolerance.
- If you have accessed a pension plan of any type before 6 April 2024 and might benefit from increasing your tax free lump sum entitlement through obtaining a Transitional Tax-Free Amount Certificate (TTFAC), then if you take a Pension Commencement Lump Sum (PCLS or tax free cash sum) or Uncrystallised Funds Pension Lump Sum (UFPLS) on or after 6 April 2024 before obtaining a TTFAC you will have lost the chance to do so. This may mean a lower entitlement to tax free lump sums during your lifetime or for your beneficiaries if you should die before age 75 than might have been the case if you had obtained a TTFAC.