



# **Bristol** Financial Resilience **Action Group**

– Interim Report  
(November 2023)





# The Starting Point

In response to the cost-of-living crises Hargreaves Lansdown wanted to use its expertise and influence to support those most affected.

As a first step we developed our [5 to Thrive campaign](#), focusing on the 5 building blocks of financial resilience: control your debt, protect your family, save a penny for a rainy day, plan for later life and invest to make more of your money. In partnership with Oxford Economics, Hargreaves Lansdown developed the [Savings and Resilience Barometer](#) which uses 16 indicators within these five pillars of financial behaviour to [report on the financial resilience of the UK](#).

The reports, released every 6 months, are aimed at advising policy makers as to the impact of their decisions.



# Bristol

Hargreaves Lansdown wanted to apply these findings, and the expertise we hold internally, to generate greater financial resilience in Bristol where Hargreaves Lansdown is proud to be based.

So the concept of Bristol Financial Resilience Action Group (BFRAG) was born.

Bristol Financial Resilience Action Group is a network of employers aimed at boosting the financial resilience of Bristol. This is achieved through signatories fulfilling 3 key commitments:

## 1. Providing Financial Education for employees

– some employers will already provide this information, for those that don't Hargreaves Lansdown has created an at-a-glance guide for firms to share with their employees.

## 2. Enhance Employee Benefits around 6 Internal Initiatives

– firms are committed to working towards making changes to their employee benefits in six specific areas. We recognise that these are not instantly achievable, especially in the current economic climate. We will work with employers within the action group on reaching these goals:

- o Sorting payroll errors within one week
- o Signposting to debt advice
- o Offering paid for life cover by default for all staff upon employment
- o Sick pay in excess of statutory sick pay
- o Incentivising pension contributions of at least 12% of pay
- o Anytime pension contribution changes

## 3. Make Financial Resilience Webinars available

– again, while some employers will already offer on-going financial education, Hargreaves Lansdown have created a series of monthly webinars based on the 5 to thrive model. Firms can signpost to these webinars where they don't otherwise offer financial education.

The group has 19 employers signed up representing 25,000 staff.

# Progress so far

The group was launched at an event hosted at Hargreaves Lansdown's offices attended by over 70 key Bristol stakeholders followed by roundtable discussing enhancing Employee Benefits around the 6 Internal Initiatives.

All employers have been distributing resources to their staff, although uptake is relatively hard to gauge. The HL materials created are:

- Financial Education flyer
- Useful resources flyer
- [A webinar hub](#)



Hargreaves Lansdown have arranged several employer teach-ins with the following groups:

- o **Step Change** – to talk about problem debt.
- o **IHC** – to talk about arranging life cover and group income protection.
- o **Great Western Credit Union** – to talk about access to cash and low cost credit.
- o **Policy in Practice** – to talk about take up of benefits.

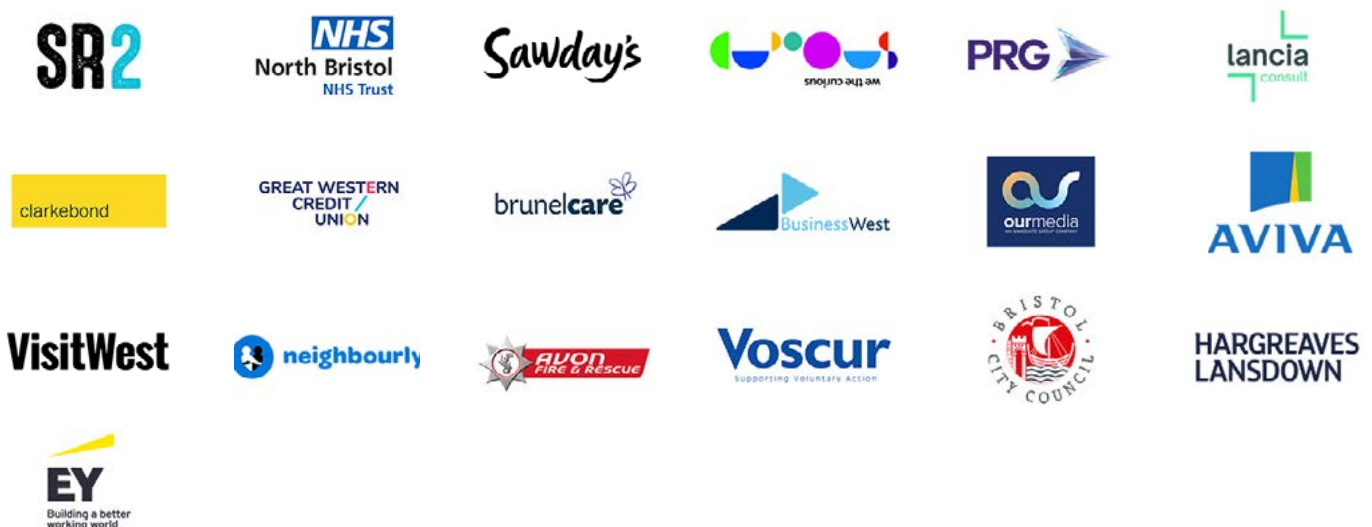
## Webinar Engagement

The webinars have received positive feedback from those attending although uptake remains relatively low with between 150 and 300 people registering each month to attend.

# Interim Results

The sessions are not universally attractive, with the sessions on debt and protecting your family having far lower turnout than those on smart spending and the cost of living crisis.

Clearly, we are competing with people's busy lives and competing demands when promoting the webinars. A big barrier is that HL are not able to share content, it must be shared locally by each employer. As well as the live webinars, each session is recorded and stored online for people to access when more convenient (available [here](#)). We've seen around 60 visits to each video.



# Survey Results

We took a sense check of the knowledge of members of the group prior to starting any of the financial education.

We plan to carry out similar assessments towards the end of the pilot. A summary of the key findings across each pillar is set out below.

| Control your debt  | Protect your family   | Save a penny for a rainy day   | Plan for later life  | Invest to make more of your money                         |
|--|---|--|--|---|
| 26% have never shopped around for a better rate on a loan, mortgage, overdraft or credit card.         | 67% know what income they would receive if they were sick and 60% know what their loved ones would receive if they passed away. | Only 43% of respondents know how much they need to have saved as an emergency fund.                        | 45% last checked their pension savings over a year ago or can't remember | 54% don't know where to start when it comes to investing. |
| 76% know how much all their bills are, with 39% having made a budget to stay on top of their finances. |   | 57% of respondents have less than 3 months of essential spending held in cash, 27% have less than 1 month. |  |   |

## Progress on improving employee benefits

We've surveyed the employers in the group after 3 months of the pilot. At this stage one change to employee benefits has been made and another 7 are actively under consideration.

We have heard anecdotally from firms about the challenging environment to increasing costs in businesses which vindicates the decision to ensure the employers are actively working towards targets rather than being expected to make quick fire changes.

## Next steps

The full pilot will run until May 2024, at which point we will report on the full findings and determine whether the work, focusing around a specific place, is valuable enough to be rolled out more widely.

The early findings are certainly encouraging and we have been struck by the enthusiasm of the group for driving forward financial resilience in our city.

