A Women's Wealth Alliance Career Guide

Women's WEALTH Alliance

CONSUMER DUTY ALLIANCE

Your career in personal finance

A female-focused guide to roles, pathways and progression

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Foreword

Over four decades, I've seen first-hand what the personal finance sector can offer women: purpose, flexibility, and the privilege of walking alongside people at important moments of their lives. The FCA's 2025 survey of financial advice firms found that about 60% of advised clients are female, yet women remain under-represented within the profession that helps people navigate, manage and grow their wealth. Only 18% of financial planners are women - a mismatch that isn't about talent or appetite but visibility, confidence, and long-standing assumptions about who belongs in this sector.

When women do enter personal finance, the reality is strikingly positive. Based on our own research of over 500 women, the vast majority report high levels of flexibility, strong support from colleagues, and meaningful opportunities to progress. Perhaps most compelling of all, 93% of women who have worked in financial planning would recommend it to other women.

The biggest barrier is perception. Too many women still see personal finance as a male-dominated world where they do not belong. That view doesn't just hold women back, it limits the entire sector. The financial planning profession should reflect the people it serves.

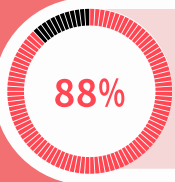
This guide shines a light on some of the core roles within personal finance, tells women's stories, and maps out the diverse routes into and through the sector. It highlights the opportunities, the realities, and the practical steps women can take to build a fulfilling, adaptable, and long-term career.

Whether you're just starting out, considering a career change or returning to work, there is a space for you. There is a genuine need for your perspective, your skills, and your voice.

Vanessa Barnes
Chair of The Women's Wealth Alliance

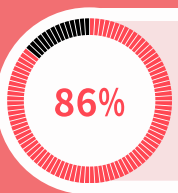
KEY DATA FROM OUR

Women, Wealth & the Workplace Survey WITH YOUGOV



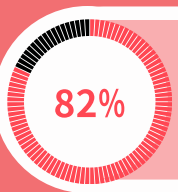
JOB FLEXIBILITY

88% of women surveyed, currently working in the personal finance sector, reported that there is a great deal/fair amount of job flexibility in their role.



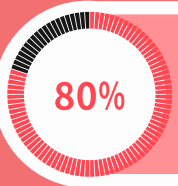
SUPPORT

86% feel/felt supported by their colleagues, 79% felt supported by the company they work for, and 74% are supported by their boss/manager.



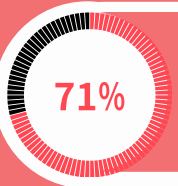
WORK AND LIFE BALANCE

82% of women surveyed, currently working in the personal finance sector, think they have a good work-life balance.



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

80% of women feel able to develop professionally in their current roles, especially those in mortgage advice (95%) and financial coaching (93%).



GREAT PROFESSION TO WORK IN

71% of women surveyed, who are currently working in the profession, have no plans to leave financial services.

Read the research here

Before you get started

You do not need to feel totally prepared to begin a career in personal finance.

Many women avoid applying for positions, unless they feel they can meet every role specification. In reality, most career paths in finance are built step by step. Skills develop quickly once you're inside the profession.

This guide was compiled with the input from over 100 women currently working in financial services, as well as drawing on data from The Women's Wealth Alliance 2025 Survey "Women, Wealth and the Workplace", which surveyed over 500 women in the profession.

Objective of this guide

Roles differ between firms. This isn't a complete guide to all roles, but it will help you understand core roles and how they relate to each other.

We aim to share with you:

- What would be involved in a role on a day to day basis.
- Realistic entry routes.
- Transferable skills.
- How to make a confident first move, not a perfect one.

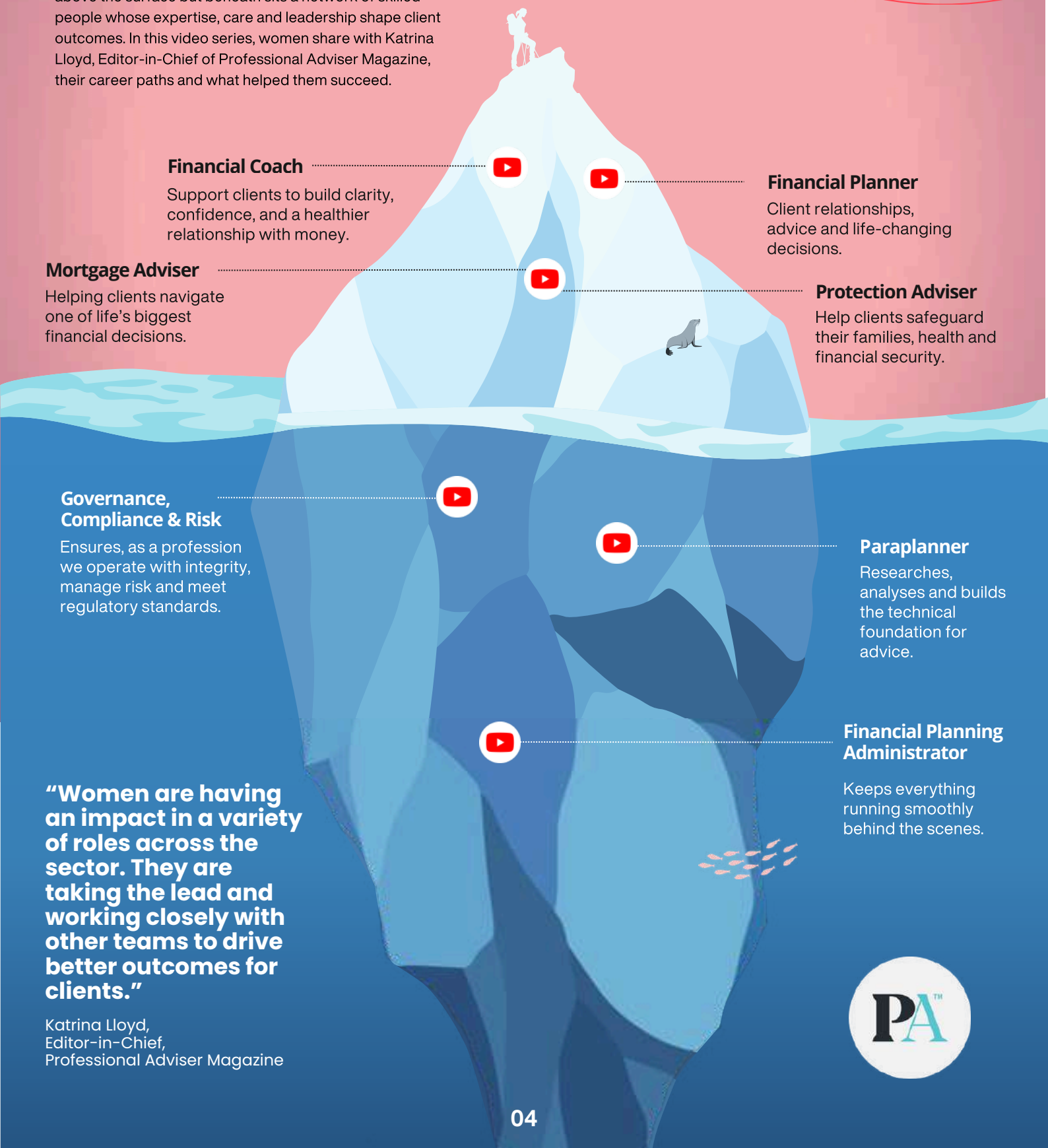
For each role, we give details on:

- WHAT YOU'LL BE DOING
- WORKING PATTERNS
- HOW TO ENTER
- PROGRESSION OPPORTUNITIES
- WHAT HELPS WOMEN THRIVE
- HONEST REALITIES AND HOW TO NAVIGATE THEM

The whole picture

DISCOVER REAL CAREER JOURNEYS

Financial advice is like an iceberg, with client-facing roles above the surface but beneath sits a network of skilled people whose expertise, care and leadership shape client outcomes. In this video series, women share with Katrina Lloyd, Editor-in-Chief of Professional Adviser Magazine, their career paths and what helped them succeed.



"Women are having an impact in a variety of roles across the sector. They are taking the lead and working closely with other teams to drive better outcomes for clients."

Katrina Lloyd,
Editor-in-Chief,
Professional Adviser Magazine

"I prefer the hustle and bustle of admin. I enjoy not knowing what will land on my desk on a daily basis."
Open-ended response, WWA role surveys

Average Salary
Junior £22-£27k
Senior £35k+

FINANCIAL PLANNING ADMINISTRATION

THE "ANCHOR" WHO KEEPS EVERYTHING MOVING

This role is known by a range of titles, including financial planning or wealth administration, depending on the firm's approach. These women are the steady hands behind the scenes of financial planning, the people who make client relationships feel seamless and supported. This role is people and process-oriented, with expectations of accuracy, communication, and collaboration. There are no mandatory qualifications; development is on-the-job and there is scope for professional upskilling with strong progression potential. It is a great entry point for women looking to build a meaningful, long-term career in financial services.

WHAT YOU ACTUALLY DO

Day-to-day operational support ensuring administration, compliance and client servicing run smoothly, so advisers can focus on giving high-quality advice. Skills include:

- Clear communication
- Collaboration
- Being detail-focused
- Organisation and proactivity
- Resilience under pressure

WORKING PATTERNS

This role tends to offer:

- Full-time roles with strong routine
- Increasingly flexible options
- Low evening/weekend demand

COMMON ENTRY ROUTES

- Starting out: school / college / apprenticeship
- Graduate routes into admin and operations
- Internal move from other roles like client servicing
- Career changers looking for stability and structure
- Returners: Ideal for women re-entering work due to structure and transferable skills.

PROGRESSION

Many women build long, rewarding careers in this role, some move on to a wide range of roles including:

- Paraplanner or client support specialist
- Operations or compliance support
- Outsourced administration provider

One of the strongest gateway roles in the sector.

WHY WOMEN THRIVE

- Flexibility
- Stability and structured work
- Client contact without sales pressure
- Clear skills development
- Supportive team culture

HONEST REALITIES

Workloads can be high and deadlines tight. Successful women set clear expectations, use structured workflows, and focus on improving processes rather than merely completing tasks. Navigating regulation becomes easier with training and experience. Working with different personalities strengthens communication skills.

"There is a misconception that it is all about the numbers. It is about deep relationships, empathy and explaining complex concepts in a relatable way"
Self-employed Financial Planner, 34 years, Wealth & Workplace Survey

Average Salary
Junior £30-£40k
Senior £60k+
often plus bonus

FINANCIAL PLANNER

THE "NAVIGATOR" HELPING PEOPLE SHAPE THEIR FINANCIAL FUTURE.

Financial Planners support people through some of the most important decisions of their lives. The role blends technical knowledge with strong interpersonal skills, offers excellent earning potential and long-term career progression. It's a flexible, values-driven career where women can make a real impact by helping clients understand their options, plan confidently, and achieve their goals. The role is regulated and carries significant responsibility, so new advisers must hold a minimum of QCF Level 4 Diploma in Regulated Financial Planning (or an equivalent qualification). Based on our research, 93% of financial planners would recommend the role to other women demonstrating high advocacy and overall career satisfaction.

WHAT YOU ACTUALLY DO

Evaluate clients' financial situation, put strategies in place to bridge where they are now with where they want to be, and recommend financial solutions. Skills include:

- Communication
- Empathy
- Problem-solving
- Attention to detail
- Time management

WORKING PATTERNS

This role tends to offer:

- Full-time roles with strong routine
- Increasing flexible options
- Low evening/weekend demand

COMMON ENTRY ROUTES

- Graduate or academy pathways
- Financial admin to paraplanning to advice route
- Career changers
- Apprenticeships
- Paraplanning or support roles before transitioning to advice, especially good for returners to the profession.

PROGRESSION

Many women build long, rewarding careers in this role, some move on to a wide range of roles including:

- Paraplanner or client support specialist
- Operations or compliance support
- Outsourced administration provider

One of the strongest gateway roles in the sector.

WHY WOMEN THRIVE

- Helping clients and purpose driven work
- Flexibility for family and lifestyle
- Strong earnings potential
- Ability to build a niche or specialism

HONEST REALITIES

This role carries a lot of responsibility, but structured qualification pathways and mentoring helps planners build confidence. It takes time to generate income and your own leads. The learning curve is real, but women thrive in a place where they can apply technical skills and empathy, emotional intelligence and building trusted client relationships.

"Manage your own time around other commitments and have a massive positive impact on clients' financial resilience & wellbeing."
Financial Coach, open-ended response, WWA role surveys

Average Salary
Junior £25-£35k
Senior £40k+

FINANCIAL COACHING

THE "ARCHITECT" HELPING OTHERS TO MANAGE THEIR OWN MONEY.

A purpose driven role with a deep behavioural focus. Coaches walk beside clients in a safe and supportive relationship, helping them build confidence, reshape their relationship with money, and take control of their financial lives. Unlike regulated financial advice, it has no mandated minimum qualifications, though employers or networks may require in house training.

WHAT YOU ACTUALLY DO

Help clients improve their relationship with money and set financial goals. Build confidence and clarity around everyday financial decisions. Skills include:

- Trust-building
- Empathy
- Listening & communication
- Emotional intelligence
- Creative problem-solving
- Behaviour-change

WORKING PATTERNS

Financial coaching is one of the most flexible roles:

- Very high part-time availability
- Full flexibility in working hours
- Ability to design your own diary
- Often home-based

COMMON ENTRY ROUTES

There is no 'traditional' route, that's the beauty of it!

- Career changers (the largest group)
- Previous coaching roles
- Financial planners looking for a wellbeing-focused path
- Women transitioning from caring, teaching, or counselling backgrounds

PROGRESSION

- Senior coach or head coach
- Transition into regulated financial advice
- Behavioural coaching specialist
- Mental wellbeing and money resilience roles
- Neurodiversity focused coaching

WHY WOMEN THRIVE

- Flexibility and control over working hours
- High levels of client impact
- Accessible entry routes without immediate qualifications
- Strong peer communities and collaboration
- Strongly appeals to women for purpose and flexibility

HONEST REALITIES

Building a client base in a growing sector takes time, but strong networks, consistent delivery, and clear communication support steady growth. Training standards vary, many coaches create their own structure through courses, supervision, and peer communities. Coaching provides a natural route into regulated advice, with many transferable skills.

"Most businesses I've worked at understand that if you've got children at school age you have to be flexible, otherwise you're losing a good worker."
51, Paraplanning
(Women, Wealth and the Workplace survey)

Average Salary
Junior £28-£35k
Senior £50k+

PARA PLANNING

THE "TECHNICIAN" BUILDING THE FOUNDATION FOR ADVICE.

Paraplanners are the technical backbone of financial planning. Following research and analysis, they transform complex information into clear, high-quality recommendations that change lives. Paraplanning is not a regulated role, but most employers require a professional baseline, typically a Level 4 Diploma in Regulated Financial Planning, or a clear commitment to working towards it. This ensures paraplanners have the technical grounding needed to produce accurate, high-quality analysis and recommendations. Paraplanning is one of the most gender-balanced roles in advice, offering strong flexibility and technical challenge. It's also a community-driven profession with high levels of peer support.

WHAT YOU ACTUALLY DO

Analyse data, research strategies, draft suitability reports, ensure advice is accurate and compliant. Depending on the firm, part of your role may be client facing. Skills include:

- Analytical thinking
- Technical curiosity
- Attention to detail
- Precision
- Communication
- Distilling complexity

WORKING PATTERNS

- Some of the best flexible working options
- Remote roles, including fully remote
- Full-time or part-time
- Clear working hours with low client-facing demand

COMMON ENTRY ROUTES

This is one of the most accessible technical roles in the sector.

- Admin and support roles
- Apprenticeships
- Graduate pathways
- Career changers into technical work

PROGRESSION

- Chartered paraplanner
- Paraplanning manager or team leader
- Operations (including team/technical leadership)
- Technical specialist and compliance
- Financial advice
- Self-employed paraplanning

WHY WOMEN THRIVE

- Excellent flexibility
- Lower client-facing pressure compared to advice
- Structured working style
- Collaboration, and supportive community
- Intellectually stimulating
- Good earnings potential, as qualifications progress

HONEST REALITIES

Complex workloads and varied adviser expectations can be demanding. Success comes from clear boundaries, strong communication, and building technical confidence. Regulation evolves frequently, yet paraplanners stay ahead through curiosity, continuous learning and peer support.

"I used to want to be a teacher, but it didn't pay well, so I looked into other roles where I could help empower and educate other people, which I can do in my role"
43, Mortgage adviser (Women, Wealth and the Workplace survey)

Average Salary
Junior £25-£30k
Senior £40k+
often plus bonus

MORTGAGE ADVICE

THE "PATHFINDER" HELPING CLIENTS FIND THE RIGHT ROUTE HOME.

Mortgage advisers help people with what is often the biggest financial commitment they will ever make. You would be helping people borrow the money needed to buy or remortgage a property, and to make sure the mortgage is suitable, affordable, and approved. It's a client-facing role that blends technical knowledge with emotional intelligence and good communication skills, making it both impactful and rewarding. Mortgage advice is a regulated profession, and advisers must hold a minimum qualification. CeMAP is the most widely recognised route, with equivalent CII qualifications also accepted across the industry. 95% of mortgage advisers surveyed in the WWA YouGov survey felt able to develop professionally in their current role.

WHAT YOU ACTUALLY DO

Speak to clients, research mortgage deals, recommend options, process applications, liaise with lenders and solicitors. Skills include:

- Trust building
- Listening & communication
- Empathy
- Organisation
- Administration
- Care for others

COMMON ENTRY ROUTES

- Banking
- Estate agency
- Admin/support roles
- Mortgages, some advisers do both
- Accessible career change for returners to work

CeMAP (or equivalent) qualification required.

WHY WOMEN THRIVE

- Flexibility around family commitments
- Meaningful, client-supportive work
- Strong earning potential
- Role models for female clients as women often open up more to female advisers
- No glass ceiling in self-employed models
- Good earning opportunities

WORKING PATTERNS

- Often full time
- Some evenings/weekends
- Self-employed models common
- Flexible, with growing remote options

PROGRESSION

Progression is less about formal higher qualifications and more about specialisms and soft skill maturity.

- Equity release
- Protection
- Brokerage ownership
- Transition into financial planning, but this requires further qualifications.

HONEST REALITIES

This role requires high self-motivation, resilience, and commercial awareness, especially in self-employed or if you are part of a financial services network. Lead generation can be challenging, but for women who enjoy relationship building, there are great opportunities for progression, independence, and client impact.

"A high level of empathy is required and a genuine sense of helping others and job satisfaction"
Protection adviser, Open ended response, (WWA role surveys)

Average Salary
Junior £35+
Senior £60k+
often plus bonus

PROTECTION ADVICE

THE "GUARDIAN ANGEL" AND PROTECTOR OF EVERYONE'S WEALTH.

Roles within the protection sector help ensure that individuals, families and businesses are financially supported if something unexpected happens. The work is highly client-focused, requiring strong communication skills and empathy to understand personal circumstances and guide customers through sensitive conversations. Women can bring a natural ability to connect, reassure, and support. Protection aligns well with flexible, purpose-driven work, with good earnings potential. Qualification expectations vary widely by employer and for many roles technical depth is valued but not required, offering an accessible career path.

WHAT YOU ACTUALLY DO

Varies greatly from assessing clients' needs, recommending insurance, to assessing risk within underwriting, processing applications and handling claims. Skills include:

- Communication
- Empathy
- Resilience
- Organisation
- Confidence
- Ability to simplify complex topics

COMMON ENTRY ROUTES

- Mortgage advice, some advisers do both
- Admin roles
- Career changers
- Apprenticeships
- Qualifications vary depending on scope
- Good transition for returners from financial services roles

WHY WOMEN THRIVE

- Flexibility and remote options
- Strong earning potential
- Job satisfaction / helping families
- Balanced and supportive culture
- Community and collaboration
- Family-friendly hours

WORKING PATTERNS

- Mostly full-time
- Good part-time/flexible options
- Hybrid/remote opportunities
- Some evening/weekend work depending on demand

PROGRESSION

This is a career that offers multiple technical niche areas, offering opportunity for career depth and diversification.

- Underwriting
- Management roles
- Produce provider roles
- Mortgage or financial advice roles and paraplanning

HONEST REALITIES

Protection involves balancing regulation, product complexity, and sales targets. It is fast-paced, pressurised and has underwriting challenges. Women thrive by bringing empathy, problem solving, and a collaborative approach. The flexibility available in roles, including part-time and hybrid options is attractive for those balancing work and life.

"I took a compliance route for my first position in finance. It was only then I recognised the magnitude of the sector. Different firms, products, ops, types of roles."
Open ended response (Women, Wealth and the Workplace survey)

Compliance:
Junior: £35+
Senior: £50k+
-
Training & Competence: £45k+

GOVERNANCE COMPLIANCE & RISK

THE "SENTINEL" WHO PROTECTS THE BUSINESS AND IDENTIFIES RISKS

These roles ensure that financial services firms operate safely, ethically and within regulations. The work combines regulatory oversight, risk assessment, policy development, and quality assurance, acting as a core part of organisational governance. Compliance ensures financial services are delivered fairly, safely, and to the right standards. Risk roles identify issues before they escalate, protecting both customers and firms. Governance roles shape culture, competence, conduct, and decision-making. Together, these functions safeguard clients and strengthen firms from the inside out.

WHAT YOU ACTUALLY DO

Interpreting financial regulation, process design, conducting audits and client file checks, carrying out investigations, managing training and competence. Skills include:

- Attention to detail
- Time management
- Problem solving
- Good judgement
- Balancing commercial
- realities and compliance

COMMON ENTRY ROUTES

- Internal progression (admin, file checking)
- Analytical and audit backgrounds
- Advice or paraplanning roles

No mandatory qualifications required but in many firms Level 4 Diploma is increasingly preferred along with audit/accounting or CISI qualifications which are also useful.

WHY WOMEN THRIVE

- High degree of flexibility
- Analytical thinking
- Independence and control over workload
- Communication and relationship building
- Judgement under pressure
- Opportunity to influence firm culture and standards

WORKING PATTERNS

- Full-time roles
- Strong flexibility, including part time/remote work
- Evening requirements when busy
- Great for women needing long-term adaptability

PROGRESSION

- Head of Compliance/Risk/Audit
- Legal/regulatory technical roles
- Non-executive director positions
- Consultancy
- Financial crime specialist

HONEST REALITIES

These roles can be high-pressure, with complex regulatory workloads and cultural challenges, such as male-dominated environments. Women succeed by building specialist knowledge, setting clear boundaries, and drawing on supportive networks and mentors. Over time, these strengths translate into credibility, influence, and progression.

What gender imbalance looks and feels like

"Once women enter careers within personal finance, they feel supported by their company, manager and colleagues"

When our research asked about the biggest barriers preventing more women from entering the personal finance sector:

- **84% cited it being seen as a male dominated sector.**
- **49% said there is a lack of education or knowledge of the sector amongst women.**
- **47% said women think a career in finance is "not for them".**

Yet it appears that once women enter careers within personal finance, the majority feel supported by their company, manager and colleagues, see plenty of opportunity to progress and are able to achieve a good work-life balance.

Financial services is undeniably still male-dominated in several areas, particularly senior leadership, business ownership, and financial planning roles. That is a structural reality, not a reflection of women's capability. However, the picture is changing. Many firms are actively seeking greater gender balance, and some functions such as paraplanning and client support are already more balanced.

Understanding gender in personal finance

Sector research shows that clear role models and a sense of belonging boost persistence and performance for underrepresented groups. When women can see others progressing, aspiration rises and self-doubt reduces.

- You may be one of fewer women in certain teams or meetings.
- You may occasionally need to assert expertise more clearly.
- You may encounter assumptions about confidence, ambition, or availability.

However, and much more importantly, look to work in environments that value collaboration, structured development, and transparent progression. Workplaces like this allow everyone to thrive, not just women.

The key is not to avoid male-dominated environments, it is to choose firms that demonstrate:

- Visible female leadership
- Clear promotion criteria
- Mentoring or sponsorship support
- Flexible working in practice (not just policy)
- Respectful, collaborative culture

Many women who thrive in finance report that once competence and credibility are established, influence grows quickly.

What's your next step?

You do not need a ten-year plan. Careers in finance are rarely linear. Many women build careers across multiple roles over time. The most important factor is not the overall career plan but movement, so just take the first step.

"I want structure and an easy entry point"

START IN ADMINISTRATION

"I'm looking for technical depth without advice"

TARGET PARAPLANNING

"I value purpose and flexibility"

EXPLORE COACHING

"Impact, autonomy and earnings growth are key"

CONSIDER ADVICE ROLES

"I'd like to influence culture and standards"

CHECK OUT COMPLIANCE

To get started on your journey download more resources from our website

Women Wealth and the Workplace Survey Methodology

Fieldwork for this survey took place between 2nd - 23rd June 2025. YouGov provided the Consumer Duty Alliance with open links to distribute to women in the personal finance sector.

The data is based on 540 responses from women who currently or previously worked across financial planning, mortgage and protection advice, financial coaching, academy members and apprentices, paraplanning, compliance, training and competence and support roles.

Among the respondents, 338 were financial planners. The survey was complemented by 15 in-depth interviews for a more granular view on the subject matter. Further independent research was undertaken by the Women's Wealth Alliance and findings are based on 61 responses to specific role surveys throughout January and February 2026.

With thanks to IBOSS, LV=, Royal London and Quilter who sponsored the YouGov research and all those who supported this guide. Salary band information kindly supplied by Truestar Talent - based on typical ranges seen across the UK.

Women's WEALTH Alliance

CONSUMER DUTY ALLIANCE