

Welcome to the Winter edition of OLFP Connect

In This Edition:



Market Update: Latest market trends and investor insights.



Planning Focus: Timely strategies for smarter financial decisions.



Auto-Enrolment: What's coming and how to prepare.



Client Q&A: Your questions, answered with expert guidance.



OLFP News: Team updates, milestones, and behind-the-scenes.



Smart Money Tips: Quick wins for long-term financial health.



Explore More: Extra tools and insights worth reading.

A MESSAGE FROM THE MANAGING DIRECTOR

AS 2026 BEGINS, WE'RE REFLECTING NOT JUST ON MARKETS, BUT ON MEANINGFUL PROGRESS.

In 2025, we had more in-depth conversations than ever. Clients asked thoughtful questions about pensions, purpose-led investing, and preparing for the smooth transfer of wealth - and that growing curiosity is something we welcome.

This year, auto-enrolment will bring a significant shift in how retirement savings are managed in Ireland. We're here to keep you informed, prepared, and confident.

As financial lives become more complex, our role remains clear: to provide clarity, guidance, and trusted partnership. Whether you're planning retirement or building your future, we look forward to supporting you in 2026.

Cleona Kinahan

Retirement & Family Wealth Planner





Market & Economic Update – What It Means for You

Markets have held steady in the second half of 2025
- but under the surface, investor sentiment is shifting.

While inflation continues to cool, central banks have taken a cautious stance on interest rate cuts. The ECB and Fed have hinted at slower adjustments than originally forecast. That uncertainty is keeping both equity and bond markets in a watch-and-wait mode.

Despite this, investor portfolios have benefited from continued gains in key sectors like technology, infrastructure, and green energy. Irish investors, in particular, are now seeking greater clarity on whether to “lock in” gains or stay the course.

At OLFP, our advice remains consistent: your long-term plan matters more than short-term noise. Now is a good time to revisit:

- Your exposure to market volatility
- Your income needs for the next 1–3 years
- Whether your current asset mix still suits your stage of life

We also expect 2026 to bring increased volatility, especially in the lead-up to major elections in the US and EU, and as more governments revisit fiscal policy.

The key is to avoid overreacting - and to ensure your investment strategy reflects both your goals and your need for flexibility.

As always, remember that investment values can rise and fall. Regular reviews help ensure your portfolio stays aligned with your long-term goals.

- Accessing Retirement Funds: Approved Retirement Funds (ARFs) and PRSAs remain essential structures for drawdown. The timing and order in which you access different pensions can have a major impact. We'll help you manage sequencing risk and structure tax-efficient withdrawals.

2. Tax-Smart Planning Strategies*

- Top Up Your Pension: Additional voluntary contributions (AVCs) can lower your income tax bill. Company directors and the self-employed may have greater scope.
- Small Gift Exemption: Gift up to €3,000 per person each year, tax-free — a simple way to pass on wealth.
- Capital Gains Planning: Use the €1,270 annual CGT exemption to reduce long-term exposure.

Note: Reliefs depend on your circumstances and Revenue rules. Always seek professional advice first.

3. Estate & Legacy Planning

- Review Your Will & Structures: A quick check now could avoid costly delays later. Have your family circumstances or asset values changed?
- CAT Thresholds Still Apply:
 - Group A (children): €400,000
 - Group B (siblings, nieces/nephews): €40,000
 - Group C (others): €20,000
 - Thoughtful lifetime gifting strategies can reduce the impact of inheritance tax over time.

-Mary Burke

Investment Planning Strategist



Planning Focus – Key Opportunities for 2026

As we move into 2026, now is the time to make considered moves that can strengthen your financial position. Here are three key areas to review at this time of year:

1. Pensions & Retirement Planning

As the year draws to a close, now is the time to make considered moves that can strengthen your financial position. Here are three key areas to review before year-end:

- Auto-Enrolment Awareness: Ireland's new pension scheme, My Future Fund, will begin on 1st January 2026. If you're unsure how this interacts with your existing pension strategy, we'll guide you through the implications.

Auto-Enrolment – Key Facts You Need to Know



From 1st January 2026, Ireland's long-awaited auto-enrolment pension scheme – My Future Fund – will launch, affecting employees and employers nationwide. If you're unsure how it impacts your planning, here's a quick guide:

What It Is:

A new workplace pension scheme for employees who don't already have a pension. Enrolment is automatic - no action required by the employee - though opt-out is possible after a 6 month period.

Who It Applies To:

You'll be automatically enrolled if you:

- Are aged 23 to 60
- Earn over €20,000 per year
- Don't currently have a workplace pension

Others can opt in voluntarily.

How Contributions Work:

- Employee: Starts at 1.5% of salary
- Employer: Matches employee contributions
- Government: Adds a top-up (0.5%)

These rates increase gradually over ten years to reach a 6% employer / employee match plus 2% State contribution.

Key Start Date:

01 January 2026, managed by the Central Processing Authority.

- Only ~33% of private-sector workers in Ireland have a pension.
- The State Pension alone may not support the lifestyle you want in retirement.
- Business owners and HR leads should prepare for the operational and cost impact now.
- If you already have a pension, it's crucial to ensure auto-enrolment doesn't create duplication or missed opportunities.

We're already helping clients assess how this change fits into their overall retirement strategy - especially those with existing PRSAs, executive pensions, or company schemes.

Auto-enrolment policy details are based on current guidance from the Department of Social Protection and may be subject to change prior to full implementation.

Source: Department of Social Protection – Auto-Enrolment Scheme Overview, 2025.

*Information correct as of November 2025, based on Irish legislation and Revenue guidance.

At OLFP, we help clients design portfolios that account for volatility from the outset.

That includes:

- Keeping 1–3 years of planned withdrawals
- in lower-risk assets
- Diversifying across asset classes, regions, and sectors
- Rebalancing regularly, not reactively

If you feel nervous during market dips, that's a signal to review your portfolio - not to abandon your plan.

Planning insight: Cash has a role in your strategy - but trying to outmanoeuvre the market rarely works. A long-term plan, reviewed annually, is your best defence against uncertainty.

O'Leary Financial Planning News

2025 was a year of growth - not just for our clients, but also within our team.



We're delighted to announce that **Marian Charlton** has officially completed her QFA accreditation. Her diligence, professionalism, and dedication to continuous learning have made her an invaluable part of the OLFP journey.

We've also welcomed back **Sharon Mitchell**; Sharon rejoined the team after working with us earlier in her career. She brings deep experience in client service and financial administration



Behind the scenes, we've continued enhancing our systems to make working with OLFP as seamless as possible - including platform upgrades, improved client onboarding processes, and more regular communications.

Our focus remains the same: expert guidance, delivered with clarity, care and consistency.

Client Corner – Frequently Asked Question

Q: Should I move my investments to cash during volatile times?

A: It's a natural reaction - when markets are uncertain, moving to cash feels safe. But in reality, this strategy often does more harm than good.

Market volatility is normal. What matters most is your time in the market, not your ability to time the market. Some of the strongest market gains often follow the worst days - and missing just a few of those rebounds can significantly reduce long-term returns.



O'LEARY
FINANCIAL PLANNING



Lifestyle & Smart Money Tips for a Focused 2026

After another eventful year, many clients tell us they're not setting resolutions - instead they're seeking clarity. So here are three simple strategies we recommend to help you build momentum without burnout:

1. The 'Future You' Test

Before making any big spending decision, ask:

"Will my future self thank me for this?"

It's a grounding question that helps align everyday spending with long-term goals - whether you're deciding on a holiday, home upgrade, or high-ticket impulse.

2. Book a 90-Minute Financial Review

One of the most effective things you can do at the start of the year? Step back and review the big picture.

Most clients don't need more complexity - they need confirmation they're still on the right path. That's where we come in.

Book a Q1 check-in with your OLFP adviser
and start 2026 with focus.

3. Set a 'Money Theme' Instead of Goals

Instead of listing rigid financial targets, try choosing a theme for the year - like Simplify, Strengthen, or Grow.

A clear theme gives your financial decisions direction without the pressure and helps you focus on progress over precision - so whether you're reducing debt, building cash reserves, or making investment decisions, each step feels connected to a bigger intention rather than disconnected goals..

**"Consistency, not exactness, is what
builds lasting financial resilience."**

Let's help you stay grounded and in control
in 2026 - one good decision at a time.

-Caroline Hartigan

Business Advice Specialist



Explore More at olearys.ie

Looking for additional tools, guides or a place to start planning your next step?

The OLFP website is packed with resources designed for Irish clients - including updates on pension rules, tax relief strategies, and financial planning checklists for each stage of life.

Visit olearys.ie to explore now

Or book a quick chat with one of our advisers - no pressure, just clarity.

Looking Ahead

As we start 2026, the financial landscape will continue to evolve - from new pension systems like auto-enrolment to changing tax dynamics and shifting market conditions.

Through it all, our mission at **O'Leary Financial Planning** remains the same: to provide clarity, direction, and the trusted advice you need to make confident financial decisions.

Whether you're building your future, preparing for retirement, or protecting your legacy, we'll continue to stand with you - with insight that's personal, local, and practical.

If you'd like to review your plan or prepare for the year ahead, we're here.

Schedule your 2026 financial review

If you'd like to explore any of the topics further, our team is just a call or email away.

- O'Leary Financial Planning



O'LEARY
FINANCIAL PLANNING

O'Leary Financial Planning

Liosban Business Park, Tuam Road, Galway, Ireland H91 AK8V
p: 091 778 678
e: advice@olearys.ie
www.olearys.ie

This publication contains information and advice of a general nature only and does not consider your particular objectives, financial situation or needs. You should consider if it is appropriate for your situation before acting on it. You should consider seeking the assistance of an authorised financial adviser before making any decision regarding any products mentioned in this publication.

OLFP Connect is a publication of O'Leary Insurances Life & Pensions (Galway) Ltd trading as O'Leary Financial Planning and is regulated by the Central Bank of Ireland as an Investment Business Firm under Section 10 of the Investment Intermediaries Act 1995 (as amended) and as an Insurance Intermediary under the European Union (Insurance Distribution) Regulations 2018. Copies of our regulatory authorisations are available on request.

The information is derived from sources believed to be accurate and current at the publication date and may be subject to change. While all care has been taken in the preparation of this publication, to the extent permitted by law, no warranty is given in respect of the information provided and accordingly, the licensee, its related entities, employees or representatives shall not be liable for any loss suffered arising from reliance on this information. Past performance is not a reliable indicator of future returns.

