[FEM]power in Finance - skills to thrive

"I handle the bills and budgeting. My husband is supportive, but I wish we talked more about long-term planning."

Name: Kate* (not her real name)

Country: Ireland

Introduction

Kate* is a 41-year-old HR Manager who works full-time at a large construction company. She's been in the role for eight years. While she enjoys her job, it offers limited opportunities for advancement and infrequent salary reviews and increases.
She is married to John, who owns a very small business. They have three children aged 2, 6, and 9.

Like many women, Kate once shouldered the burden of household finances alone, ggling bills, spreadsheets, and the unpredictability of a fluctuating income.

Kate's Story

Kate is the household's financial manager. She manages both the household and the business budgets. She tracks expenses in a spreadsheet, pays the bills and tries to budget smartly. However, as her husband's income fluctuates a lot, this can be challenging.

Despite her best efforts, the family struggles to save or invest any extra money. She tries to save, knowing that her children may have to move from their home to attend college in a few years, so she is worried about how she will be able to fund their education. Kate worries about the future, especially retirement. She often feels torn between supporting her family now and planning for the future.

What are Kate's goals for the future?

Kate would like to feel more in control of her long-term finances. Her goals include:

- Creating an emergency fund
- Understanding her pension entitlements
- Setting up a college savings plan
- Discussing long-term financial planning with her husband

Main financial challenges faced

Despite their combined income, the family often struggled to make ends meet due to large mortgage, high childcare expenses and irregular income from her husband's business. In the past, Kate used a credit card for emergencies and had built up credit card debt, never clearing the balance. However, found managing repayments is stressful, especially when unexpected bills arose. She occasionally missed bank payments (direct debits), leading to additional fees being imposed. Kate has a small pension through her job but had not actively planned for retirement. She felt overwhelmed by the topic and unsure where to start.

What tools help to manage Personal Finances?

Kate encourages women to explore:

✅ **Budgeting Apps & Online Banking Tools**

- Spending categories to see where your money goes
- Monthly budgets to track income vs expenses
- Alerts for overspending or bills due
- Savings pots/vaults for short-term goals (e.g. holidays, back-to-school)

✅ **Pension & Retirement Tools**

- Employer or government pension trackers
- Online calculators to project retirement income
- Comparison tools for fees and contributions

✅ **Planning & Organisation Tools**

- Basic spreadsheets or templates for family budgeting
- Online calendars for financial check-ins
- To-do lists for annual tasks and reminders to shop around for better deals(e.g. insurance review, tax returns)

Top Tip

"Treat your personal finances like a business: track, plan, review and don't wait to be perfect. Start small, stay consistent, and build your confidence step by step"

What helped overcome those challenges?

Kate's turning point came when she realised, she was already managing complex finances for her husband's business yet didn't apply the same structure or confidence to her own household planning. She overcame her financial uncertainty by:

•**Reframing her skills** – recognising that she already had strong budgeting and admin abilities
•**Taking small, consistent steps** – starting with savings pots and basic budgeting apps
•**Building confidence through action** – tracking her pension and seeking independent professional advice, setting clear goals, and sharing what she learned with others

What once felt overwhelming is now manageable. Kate doesn't claim to know everything, but she knows *enough to act*, and that's made all the difference. "I stopped waiting until I knew it all. I just started with what I had and that was enough to change everything."

What interventions or support would have been useful?

Looking back, Kate identified several supports that would have made her financial experience easier and faster:

- Simple, step-by-step tools to navigate pensions, savings, and financial decisions without jargon.
- Access to Practical Financial Tools, including templates, checklists, guides, and calculators to manage personal finances and plan sustainably, all adapted to women's diverse life contexts
- Access to financial literacy learning with options that work around family life, care responsibilities, and rural access limitations.

"If a programme like FEMPOWER had existed earlier, I'd have built confidence faster and with far less stress".

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