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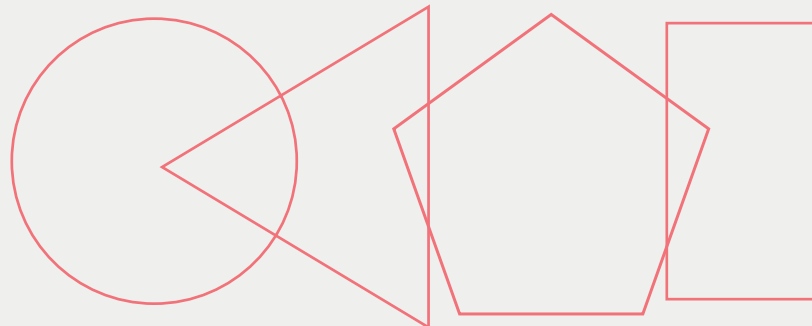
**Capital City Media**

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# Forward Look

April 2021



# Coronavirus one year on: Get ready to hear 'one year on' a lot more



Edmund Greaves, senior consultant - news and content, MRM

One year on from the worst of the first wave of the coronavirus crisis, get ready to hear that phrase. A lot. Says Edmund Greaves.

Boris putting us all into lockdown, remember that? That was exactly a year ago. One year into banana bread baking, leisure gear wearing and Zoom quizzing, for those of us fortunate enough to work from home.

For many though it's obviously been a pretty tough 12 months.

With such a monumental anniversary on our doorstep, there's no doubt you'll see a lot of 'one year on' talk from politicians and in the media.

So, what more can we expect to be 'one year on'? Well, 5 April is one year on from Sir Keir Starmer winning the Labour leadership. 8 April was the worst day for deaths in the first wave (later surpassed in January this year). 11 April is one year on from HM Queen delivering her coronavirus national broadcast.

We've already passed the anniversary of the nadir for markets. The FTSE 100 hit its covid low on 20 March. It has grown nearly 30% since then.

They say markets predict the future by pricing it in. If that's the case, they started predicting our bounce back surprisingly early on. But a year in, they seem roughly to be judging it quite well (by UK standards).

There's a good chance we might leave the 'one year on's' behind as things look up for the future though. We're coming out of lockdown, as non-essential shops,

hospitality and hairdressers are allowed to reopen on 12 April in England.

We're also entering a new tax year (exciting, I know) which falls on Easter Monday, 5 April. The quirk of this is many of us will have to get our affairs done early as things like BACs don't seem to have figured out how to work on a public holiday yet.

I've shoved my extra bit of LISA contribution in early as a result, and you should do anything lingering straight away too.

On 11 April is National Pet Day. For better or worse, many more of us this year than last year may have reason to celebrate. The lockdown dogs' boom was a real thing last year – I should know because I was shopping for them last April (my landlord later squashed that idea [hence the LISA]).

April is also a bumper month for awards as it appears many media firms get back into gear after lockdown. This includes events and deadlines – most notably: the Investment Life & Pensions Moneyfacts Awards voting deadline on 16 April, and Investment Week's Sustainable & ESG Investment Awards and Financial Adviser Diversity in Finance Awards entry deadlines both fall on 30 April.

All the best from MRM and CCM, wishing you all a fresh and vibrant Spring.

# The government reconfirms draconian covid laws – and may win upcoming elections to boot



Paul Montague-Smith, senior counsel - public affairs, MRM

A year on from the first national lockdown and MPs have again extended the emergency powers restricting our basic freedoms, again by a large majority.

Despite 35 Conservative rebels ringing alarm bells about a state becoming drunk on power, with Labour's support there was never a threat of the Government being defeated.

The Government has also refused to rule out a further extension in October. After a volte face by the Prime Minister, it appears to be paving the way for vaccination/immunity certificates once all adults have been offered a jab, with individual businesses expected to decide whether to require them.

Much therefore still depends on the progress and effectiveness of the vaccination programme, which is facing its first significant bump in the road with delays of AstraZeneca supplies. If the EU Commission – fighting a desperate rear-guard action to regain credibility – prevents AstraZeneca from exporting to the UK until the EU has 'caught up', we could see the bump becoming a sinkhole.

A negotiated way forward is in everyone's interests, not least because a breakdown in relations over vaccines would have a knock-on impact for an agreement on the functioning of the Northern Ireland protocol, over which relations are already extremely fragile. As expected, the success of the vaccination programme so far has given a significant boost to the Government. The Conservatives have opened a nine-point lead over Labour as we head towards devolved parliamentary, local and mayoral elections at the beginning of May.

Labour did very badly in the 2017 local elections. If they don't make good progress at recovering from that position alarm bells will be going off at Labour HQ. Another key indicator will be in the Red Wall constituencies where the Tories won at the general election but where they have no councillors.

If the Conservatives make inroads at that level, they know they're on track. One thing always in the Conservatives' favour is that older people are more likely to vote in elections and are more likely to vote Conservative. Being the prime beneficiaries of the vaccine programme that tendency is only likely to be stronger this time.

In Scotland, Nicola Sturgeon has survived the imminent threat to her position as First Minister. The big question is whether, given the recent turmoil, she can secure the majority she needs to claim a clear mandate for a second referendum.

Alex Salmond's launch of a new pro-independence party will be a personal blow to Sturgeon and threatens to fracture the pro-independence vote over time. But because of the way the Scottish electoral system works, by only fielding candidates for regional lists Salmond's new party could actually help secure a majority for independence in the next parliament.

Public support for independence has dropped over the last few months, pretty much back to neck and neck. If pro-independence parties fail to get a majority of seats, an SNP-led Government is unlikely to go for a referendum until a clear and sustained lead for independence re-emerges. Hesitancy on Sturgeon's part, though, could of course play to Salmond's advantage.

In Wales Labour faces its worst result since devolution began and could lose overall control of the Senedd, with Plaid Cymru, the Tories and the Abolish the Assembly Party all likely to gain seats. In London, however, polling suggests Labour's Sadiq Khan could get a landslide win without having to go to a second round of counting.

Back in Westminster the date of the Queen's Speech has been set for Tuesday 11 May. With the road out of lockdown mapped we can expect Boris Johnson to focus on accelerating his levelling up and global Britain agendas. Key pieces of legislation in the next parliamentary term will include the new regulatory framework for financial services.

An interim Bill dealing with priority sectors is in the later stages of its parliamentary journey. A couple of hot topics have emerged during the debates. The Government was defeated in a vote on whether the FCA should place a statutory duty of care on firms towards consumers.

That might be overturned by the Commons but, along with a perceived need for regulators to do more to assess and address climate risks, it is likely to be a subject of continuing debate in the weeks and months ahead.

# Two Minutes With... Andy Webb, Becleverwithyourcash

MRM catches up with blogger, podcast host and broadcaster Andy Webb, who tells us why YouTube is the personal finance platform to watch, his proudest moments as a blogger and what personal finance media gets right



## Tell us a bit about yourself

I run a blog called Becleverwithyourcash as well as a podcast called Cash Chats, and have stepped into more YouTube content in the past year with personal finance videos. I'm also a freelance personal finance journalist and I write a monthly money column in Reader's Digest.

I live up north in Yorkshire. I got ahead of the coronavirus work-from-home curve moving out of London about three years ago.

## What got you into the blogging side of personal finance?

When I started the blog about seven years ago, I never thought it was something that could become a full-time pursuit for me like it is now.

I worked at the BBC for 11 years on the production side of things – from shows like Football Focus to Crimewatch. But in 2013 I took an opportunity for redundancy and went travelling which gave me time to think a bit more about what I actually wanted to be doing for a living.

I had never thought of money saving as a career, but my wife pointed out to me that it was something I was really passionate about, always helping friends and family with, so I just started blogging about it and have branched out to broader personal finance topics.

## Talk us through Becleverwithyourcash – what's it about and how long has it been going?

It's an everyday personal finance and consumer blog, and I put my money where my mouth is.

At the start I was working on it in the evenings and at weekends. For the first couple of years, it really was only a hobby. My day job was running the blog for the Money Advice Service (MAS).

But as MAS was wound down, I transitioned to focusing more of my time on the blog and I've been full time on it since summer 2018.

## What do you do outside the sphere of pure blogging?

Blogging takes most of my time at the moment. If anything, I'm generating more work for myself than I need to be!

But I'm working more on alternative media such as my Cash Chats podcast and YouTube videos which is a really interesting area to develop. I've had a YouTube channel for a long time. I always did short clips – get to the point quickly – that's how traditional TV works when tackling particular subject areas.

But in the last year the engagement with longer videos seems to have changed significantly. People seem to have more time to spend on long content. In the past spending 20 minutes discussing the best banking accounts in a video seemed like it would be too much – but people actively want this detailed content.

So now I tend to spend longer discussing the ins and outs of products in videos. People really seem to watch it all and take it in. There's an explosion in

☞ There's a lot of national debt to be paid back and someone will have to foot that bill. We may beat the virus this year, but the costs of it will go on for a long time

other money 'influencers' on YouTube, it really is a big expansion into that platform. Although I wouldn't call myself an influencer! The key demographic for my viewers on that platform seems to be around 25-45 years old.

**You've worked for BBC TV and Money Saving Expert in the past. Have you ever considered going back 'in-house' to a publication?**

I love what I do. I think it's too easy in personal finance media to preach certain skills and values but not really follow through on them personally. The best part for me about blogging is sharing my own experiences through my work.

I also enjoy the freedom I have of setting my own schedule so I have no interest in going in-house somewhere. I would however consider more TV presenting if the opportunity arose. I presented a Channel Five show called Shop Smart Save Money for a year which was a brilliant experience, but the time required did put pressure on my own channels.

**Do you work regularly with PRs? What could they do better to help you?**

I tend to be the one proactively contacting PRs when it comes to writing stories as it depends on what I'm looking at. It can be frustrating when there's no phone number or contact name to speak to at a firm.

In terms of opportunities that come to me – it's hard to keep up with it because my email is often just bombarded with information, most of which is not relevant to me. In recent weeks I've probably had

hundreds of emails about the GameStop investing saga – but it's not something I'd write about, so it's wasted on me!

**What achievement are you most proud of in your time in Personal Finance media?**

I'm definitely proud to have won awards for the blog, including Personal Finance Blog of The Year at the Headlinemoney Awards a couple of times. It's good to be recognised by your peers for your work.

**What is one thing you think personal finance media gets right?**

Personal finance media has gotten better in recent years in breaking concepts down for their audiences. A lot of different subject areas like credit cards or mortgages can be quite complex, so being able to explain them jargon-free and easily is really important.

**What is the number one hot button personal finance issue for you right now?**

No surprises really, but how we recover financially from coronavirus is the big one. There's a lot of national debt to be paid back and someone will have to foot that bill. We may beat the virus with vaccines and such this year, but the costs of it will go on for a long time to come.



## Two Minutes With...Sophie Mayall, director, MRM



**We catch up with Sophie Mayall, one of the directors at MRM, on her work growing the business's institutional offering, effecting real change through PR and the importance of financial education**

### Tell us about yourself

I'm one of the directors at MRM and originally joined the agency around five years ago.

Since joining I've worked to help build up our presence in the institutional pensions and investment space and currently head our offering to that client base, where we work with a number of fantastic businesses.

Across my role I also lead accounts across our savings and investments, insurance and financial advice client base, as well as heading up our social and charity committees.

### Why did you join MRM?

I joined MRM from an agency focusing on institutional asset management. Having built up specialism in that area I liked the idea of working with a broader scope of clients and the audiences that they're trying to reach.

In the last few years since joining we've brought on 16 new clients either operating solely or partly within the institutional pensions space. These clients range from institutional asset managers, investment consultants, employee benefits and actuarial consultants, through to technology providers – complementing the names and experience we already had within the agency when I joined.

In order to support this growth, we've also taken on more specialist staff, last year recruiting Helena Jones, a senior consultant with a dedicated background in the pensions industry, to further develop our presence in this space. I now believe we have the specialist skills, technical knowledge and understanding, and client base to rival that of any specialist agencies in that sector.

MRM also had a fantastic reputation with journalists. Five years later and we've only grown that scope further and I feel lucky enough to have worked with clients who range all the way from deep consumer through to those on the highly corporate side of things.

On the investment side, we are increasingly seeing a blurring of the lines between retail and institutional offerings, and there is a real opportunity for providers to bring institutional quality products into the consumer space. We're seeing a response to this across our client base whether that be through distribution, marketing materials, content or actual product design.

### Where did your interest in financial services come from?

My mum worked in financial services on the investment side, and growing up what she did always interested and inspired me.

My politics degree – while not moving me to pursue a political career – did cement an interest in communications, so financial services PR feels like the perfect balance of the two.

Having worked in this sector for almost 10 years, I love the real-world impact of financial advice all the way through to the nitty gritty of the investment side of things.

I completed my IMC certificate a few years ago and definitely plan on taking some further exams soon. I also love maths so I've toyed with the idea of attempting the CFA! We'll see!

### What area of PR gives you the most satisfaction?

I love that the work we do with our clients has the capacity to effect real change and that it combines a number of different disciplines – whether that's communication, writing, technical knowledge or just plain organisation.

I really enjoy that this is a job where each day can look completely different to the last and, as a perhaps unhealthily competitive person, I love the buzz you get from doing a good job, whether that's landing a great story, handling a difficult situation or giving the right advice at the right time.

Being able to work on different areas of financial

“ This year has been a massive learning curve for us all – one of the things I love about this job is the fact that all the work we do is as a team

services is really rewarding too. We’ve got a range of clients from AXA IM and RWC Partners on the asset management side through to financial adviser Foster Denovo, investment platform Willis Owen and Scottish Friendly and eToro on the consumer side.

But beyond that we’re a multi-disciplinary agency. I love working with our News and Content team headed up by former journalist Nick Paler, who not only support PR but also provide content solutions to our bank of clients.

I’ve also had the privilege of getting close to and learning from Capital City Media, the media intelligence, planning and buying agency, which is also part of MRM Group. Working together with them we’re able to produce holistic communications and marketing campaigns and the insights they provide are invaluable to our understanding of the media landscape beyond journalists’ desks.

**Has lockdown changed how you work?**

Definitely. This year has been a massive learning curve for us all – one of the things I love about this job and working in an agency like MRM is the fact that all the work we do is as a team.

I’m used to calling over the desk at someone for their opinion and collaborating with my colleagues on the smallest things through to the big ones. We’ve had to learn how to move that collaboration online.

I’ve also had to learn how to get through the day without access to Paler’s snack draw and his supply of Sour Patch Kids.

**What piece of financial advice would you give your younger self?**

Listen and learn. The information is out there but unfortunately, it’s information that most young people have to go and find for themselves.

Until that changes and financial education becomes a formal part of the curriculum, I’d urge all young people to go and learn as much as they can about personal finance and advice.

I’d also tell my 20-year-old self to start saving into a pension as soon as you can, mine some bitcoin (and write down your password) and buy some Netflix shares.

**What is the one column or website that you read every day?**

My go to would definitely be the FT and BBC.

**Do you have any hobbies?**

Watching Spurs, crying over Spurs. Walking our puppy, Pippin. Snowboarding. Playing all or any games or anything with a competitive element... I also love Netball and can’t wait to start playing again.

**What would you do if you received a windfall of £10,000?**

Travel. This year has definitely made me restless for when we can travel again, Canada is first on the list! I’d also definitely invest part of it and probably spend the rest on overly expensive gym leggings.

# Two Minutes With... Drew Townley, chief executive, Kairos Media

MRM catches up with Drew Townley, chief executive of social creative agency Kairos Media on balancing social and old-school media, why having even a small social media presence matters and how not to use Love Islanders for influencer marketing



## What does Kairos do and how do you define being a 'social-first' creative agency?

Kairos Media is one of the fastest growing social, creative agencies in the UK and we've bagged awards to prove it.

We only operate in the social world. It's a pretty broad term to be totally honest but it means that anything we do reaches a client's target audience using social media in some capacity.

## Is it true that young people are moving away from 'traditional media' and towards other platforms?

It's something that's been happening for years and only now are people really starting to get their heads around it. Less than 40% of esports fans watch TV on a weekly basis (2018 – Nielsen), even less on radio.

Twitch (the biggest streaming platform in the world) and YouTube have a larger audience than Netflix, HBO and ESPN combined. Many web users are using ad blockers, even on digital-first content. You need to reach them in a new way and that's where we come in.

## You and your team often plan viral marketing stunts for clients, such as the KFC Console. Why do you do these, and do they work?

It honestly depends on what your goals are.

To get mass pick up, shift the dial from a brand perspective and sentiment side – then yes absolutely.

To drive hard sales with a one-off activation, less so – consistency is key when looking to drive purchases and stunts don't really offer that.

## You often use 'influencer marketing'. Why do you think influencer marketing works, and can firms in the financial services space see any value in such an avenue?

To my earlier point, you have to be smart about how

to talk to a younger audience now. Young people are extremely savvy when it comes to marketing and messaging, so you need to do it in an authentic way (apologies for the buzzwords).

Influencers, when chosen correctly, offer that – an authentic way to talk to a specific audience that trusts said influencer. If you get that right the results will follow.

Financial services companies are already taking advantage of influencer marketing (IM). One of our clients, Chip, is an example of this. They are using influencers as advocates that genuinely use the product, see the benefits and then educate their audience.

That's a really strong narrative to offer. You can't follow a journey anywhere else like you can with IM and content is the key to showcasing to an audience.

## What are some good and bad examples of influencer marketing?

Beauty brands have done IM right for a long time now. What they've done in the last few years is bring the talent on board as 'consultants' or genuine equity holders in new product ranges.

This has really taken it to the next level and has meant the connection between brand and the influencer's audience is stronger than ever. This in turn, has increased sales and meant loyalty to brands is consistent way past just the product range in question.

As for bad examples, anything with Love Island talent (probably a slightly harsh generalisation). It seems to be a running theme to get that talent to do anything and everything with zero regard for the fit of product and audience of an influencer.

One-off posts of random products with no real relation to a lifestyle/fashion focused Gen Z audience is a recipe for disaster and gives IM a bad name.



## “Beauty brands have done IM right for a long time now. What they’ve done in the last few years is bring the talent on board as ‘consultants’ or genuine equity holders in new product ranges

It’s slightly off topic, but also any IM that doesn’t disclose correctly that it’s a sponsored post is an example of bad IM. We see them every day and it’s a showcase of how far the industry still needs to go before it’s matured.

Unsurprisingly the agencies doing this are usually the ones that stick the next greatest automatic potato peeler in a Love Islander’s hand for all of Instagram to see.

### **If you could give brands three key tips on improving their marketing strategies going forward, what would they be?**

-Be braver. You’re not going to move the needle doing what you’ve done for the last 10 years. The media landscape moves fast these days and you’ve got to move faster

-Get on social. Even the smallest investment with a smart paid strategy will give you a real ROI.

-Balance is key. If your audience is a wide demographic

age wise, utilise social but also make sure you’re getting the mainstream media coverage you need. We’re not on a ‘bash mainstream media’ crusade, hitting both sides is essential.

### **What is the one column or website that you read every day?**

Mine are very marketing heavy: The Drum, Campaign Live, and some more focused esports articles on Esports Insider or Decerto.

### **What would you do if you received a windfall of £10,000?**

I’d lump it on 3x Rolls Royce Grantes shares or split it between Draft Kings, Flutter and Entain shares. Their expansion into the US is in its infancy but guaranteed to happen.

*Opinions expressed in this article are those of the author, do not necessarily reflect those of MRM Communications and should not be construed as financial advice.*



# Dates for your diary...

01/04/2021 Citywealth Brand Management and Reputation Awards submission deadline

01/04/2021 CIPS / Markit Manufacturing PMI

01/04/2021 New Help to Buy scheme begins

01/04/2021 Mortgage guarantee scheme launches this month

01/04/2021 New apprenticeship hiring incentive scheme begins

02/04/2021 Good Friday

02/04/2021 Workplace Savings and Benefits Awards registration deadline (Incisive Media)

04/04/2021 Deadline for private sector employers to publish annual gender pay gap reports


04/04/2021 Easter Sunday

05/04/2021 End of tax year 2020-21

06/04/2021 Recovery Loan Scheme launches

06/04/2021 Pensions changes / end of LISA relaxation rules

## KEY

 Economy, Insurance & Investing

 Mortgages & Housing

 Public Policy & Regulation

 Pensions & Benefits

 Other



# Dates for your diary...

07/04/2021 UK Official Reserves (HM Treasury)

07/04/2021 CIPS / Markit Services PMI

08/04/2021 CIPS / Markit Construction PMI

09/04/2021 The Private Equity Awards - Advisory and Diversity Awards nomination deadline

09/04/2021 Bank of England Quarterly Bulletin

11/04/2021 National Pet Day

12/04/2021 National Diversity Awards open for nominations

12/04/2021 Royal Economic Society Annual Conference (virtual)

12/04/2021 Link Q1 UK Dividend Monitor expected this week

12/04/2021 Non-essential shops, hairdressers and outdoor dining/hospitality set to resume

13/04/2021 Monthly GDP estimates (ONS)

13/04/2021 CBI and PwC Financial Services Survey

13/04/2021 Barclaycard Consumer Spending Data monthly figures

## KEY

Economy, Insurance & Investing

Mortgages & Housing

Public Policy & Regulation

Pensions & Benefits

Other



# Dates for your diary...

13/04/2021 The Future of UK Financial Services Regulation Virtual Summit (City & Finance Global)

15/04/2021 Insurance Post British Insurance Awards shortlist announcement

15/04/2021 IPA Bellwether Report on marketing budgets

15/04/2021 Business Moneyfacts Awards (virtual)

16/04/2021 UK government debt and deficit (ONS)

16/04/2021 Investment Life & Pensions Moneyfacts Awards voting deadline

19/04/2021 Economic trends in the retail sector, Great Britain: 1989 to 2019 (ONS)

19/04/2021 FinTech Week and Innovate Finance Global Summit

19/04/2021 Economic Review (ONS)

20/04/2021 Card Spending statistics (UK Finance)

20/04/2021 UK monthly unemployment figures (ONS)

20/04/2021 Markit UK Household Finance Index

## KEY

- Economy, Insurance & Investing
- Mortgages & Housing
- Public Policy & Regulation
- Pensions & Benefits
- Other



# Dates for your diary...

20/04/2021 Insurance Times Insurance2025 event (virtual)

21/04/2021 Forecasts for the UK economy statistical release (HM Treasury)

21/04/2021 UK House Price Index (ONS)

21/04/2021 UK monthly inflation figures (ONS)

21/04/2021 ESG Summit: Embracing a green and sustainable recovery (ICSA)

22/04/2021 Pensions Age Spring Conference (virtual)

22/04/2021 ECB interest rate announcement

23/04/2021 Investment Marketing and Innovation Awards entry deadline (Incisive Media)

23/04/2021 HMRC Tax Receipts and National Insurance Contributions for the UK

23/04/2021 IPM Awards entry deadline

23/04/2021 Investment Week Women in Investment Awards nomination deadline

23/04/2021 UK monthly retail sales figures (ONS)

## KEY

Economy, Insurance & Investing

Mortgages & Housing

Public Policy & Regulation

Pensions & Benefits

Other





# Dates for your diary...

23/04/2021 Public sector finances (ONS)

23/04/2021 UK Consumer Confidence Survey (GfK)

23/04/2021 Flash UK PMI

26/04/2021 EY ITEM Club Spring Economic Forecast

26/04/2021 DEFRA consultation deadline on 'amendments to the Flood Re scheme'

28/04/2021 Eiopa consultation on 'open insurance' closes

30/04/2021 Investment Week's Sustainable & ESG Investment Awards entry deadline

30/04/2021 EU reveals latest growth figures

30/04/2021 FinTech Futures Banking Technology Awards open for entries

30/04/2021 CBI Growth Indicator Survey

30/04/2021 Financial Adviser Diversity in Finance Awards entry deadline

## KEY

Economy, Insurance & Investing

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*All dates correct at the time of compilation but subject to change*



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