

Professional Paraplanner Awards 2023

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Inside

Editor's introduction and this year's judges

The Paraplanner Awards winners

Profiles of our seven awards winners

Provider Awards winners

Meet the Provider winners

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION



2023 marks the seventh year of the *Professional Paraplanner Awards*, which have grown almost every year in line with the development of the paraplanning profession itself. We established *Professional Paraplanner* in 2014 recognising that paraplanning was an undervalued and also rapidly developing role in the market, which required a publication tailored to paraplanners' specific information needs. Nine years on and we're pleased to say that insight has been proven over and over again.

These Awards are designed to recognise and celebrate paraplanning and the very skilled and talented people that exist in the paraplanning profession. More than ever it is a career in its own right and is receiving the justifiable recognition it deserves.

Our seven Paraplanner Awards now serve to recognise the wider range of roles supporting the financial planning process, from administrators, through outsourced paraplanners to paraplanner team leaders.



We also mark the companies that paraplanners tell us provide them with the best service in the industry. These are across 18 areas, from the companies who deliver the best service when onboarding new clients, through those offering the best support, to the best investment and pensions providers. We congratulate all our winners,

shortlisted candidates and all the providers nominated by our paraplanner readers for each of our awards.

Thank you to Scottish Widows and all our Partner sponsors for their support of the awards and the paraplanning profession. We know that all of these companies recognise the importance and influence of paraplanning in the financial advice market.

Rob Kingsbury
Editor, *Professional Paraplanner*

Judging panel

This year, we had a largely new set of judges, who set a very tough criteria for what they wanted to see in shortlisted candidates. So everyone who got through to this year's awards should be congratulated because it was a tough process.



Kim Bendall
Director,
Go Paraplanning



Laura Cowling
Paraplanning Team Leader,
Progeny



Martin Rooks
Head of Advisory and Partnership
Marketing, Fidelity Adviser Solutions



Les Cameron
Head of Technical,
M&G Wealth



Rob Kingsbury
Editor,
Professional Paraplanner



Caroline Stuart
Founder,
Sparrow Paraplanning



Siân Davies Cole
Director,
Plan Works



Arah Perrett
Certification Scheme Assessor &
Best Practice Trainer,
Standards International



Alexis Ward
Head of Adviser Experience,
Scottish Widows



Richard Cooper
Business Development Manager,
LIBF

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Scottish Widows is delighted to be lead sponsor of the 2023 *Professional Paraplanner Awards*.

It is no secret that paraplanners have become an indispensable part of financial advice teams – evolving substantially to become the ‘technical engine room’ of adviser businesses.

With greater levels of involvement in product research, technical analysis, and advice activities, this has increased the influence that

paraplanners have in the advice process and, ultimately, recommendations to clients.

Looking back over the past few years, paraplanning has also developed its own identity and is now very much seen as a career in its own right. This is being met by the industry with more structured career routes and the development of paraplanner leadership roles.

The high level of qualification, knowledge, experience, and expertise within the paraplanning community, as well as the

impressive thirst for self-education amongst paraplanners, can only be good for the financial services industry as a whole. These awards reflect the growing recognition of all these elements and the valuable input of paraplanners from both a business success and client outcomes perspective. We congratulate the winners and everyone shortlisted for this year’s Awards.

Ranila Ravi-Burslem
Intermediary Distribution Director,
Scottish Widows

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PROFESSIONAL PARAPLANNER 2023 AWARDS – IN PICTURES



This year we wanted to take the Awards ceremony up a notch, to reflect the growing importance and influence of paraplanners, by having the only dedicated paraplanning awards ceremony of its kind – with a formal luncheon.

Our venue was The Stationer's Hall – the Hall of trades of the guild – of 'printers, publishers, booksellers, graphic designers, librarians and newspapermen'.

Over 140 people attended the Awards ceremony, which was supported by our sponsors. Our thanks again to them for helping to make the day happen, as well as the *Professional Paraplanner* events team, who pulled out all the stops to make the day a fantastic one.



THIS YEAR'S PARAPLANNER AWARDS

Every year the *Professional Paraplanner* awards receive many entries from paraplanners all around the country, reflecting the varied and highly talented individuals and teams making up the profession.

And every year it seems to get tougher to first shortlist and then to make the final decision on who should be our winners.

This year we had seven awards – designed to enable as many paraplanners as possible to enter and covering as much of the profession as we could – from administrators to paraplanner team leaders.

We also had an expanded line up of 10 judges, welcoming previous and new judges to the process. The judging took place over four days and was quite intense, with much discussion. Our thanks to the judges for their time and input, which is much appreciated.

So, what were we looking for from our winners? Plenty when it came to their paraplanning or administrative abilities but also importantly, candidates who through their written submission and their online interview convinced the judges that in their answers and attitude they were candidates who most stood out as an aspirational role model for others.

Congratulations to the winners and also all the shortlisted candidates for making it to the final. Thank you also to our headline sponsor Scottish Widows and our seven Partner sponsors for helping make the awards happen.

As the Awards go from strength to strength, we will look at how we can enhance them



Paraplanner of the Year (In-house):
Catharine Dodd



Paraplanner Team of the Year:
Argonaut Paraplanning



Paraplanner of the Year (Outsourced):
Alison Neale



Team Leader of the Year:
Aleksandra Sasin



New Paraplanner of the Year:
Morgan Leask



Administrator of the Year:
Maria Mushtaq

further. We look forward to taking you on that journey with us.

Methodology

Entry to the awards was by self-nomination. The first test was a set 500-word essay. Shortlists are then drawn up with candidates being invited to interview by the judging panel. Judges were allocated to awards categories to reflect their particular areas of expertise. All interviews were conducted online.

Professional Paraplanner Awards 2023

Paraplanner of the Year (In-house)

Winner: Catharine Dodd -

Saltus Financial Planning

Also shortlisted:

Helen Harrison - Mazars Financial Planning

Patrick Walton - Haworths Financial Services

Paraplanner of the Year (Outsourced)

Winner: Alison Neale - Principle Paraplanning

Highly Commended: Jenna Mackenzie -

The Verve Group

Also shortlisted:

Jo Parkes - Navigatus

Team of the Year

Winner: Argonaut Paraplanning

Also shortlisted:

Corbel Partners Ltd

Team Leader of the Year

Winner: Aleksandra Sasin, Navigatus

Highly Commended -Sue McFarlane,

Plus Group

Also shortlisted:

Heena Brown - abrdn

Gemma Johnston, Corbel Partners

New Paraplanner of the Year

Winner: Morgan Leask - 7IM

Also shortlisted:

Kimberley Malin - Four Oaks Financial Services

Jack Wood - Hampshire Hill Group

Administrator of the Year

Winner: Maria Mushtaq - Holden & Partners

Also shortlisted:

Claire Ashdjian - Perspective Financial Group

Sophie Sawford - Plus Group

PARAPLANNER TEAM OF THE YEAR

In association with



Argonaut Paraplanning

Outsourced paraplanning firm Argonaut Paraplanning may have been operating for 12 years but this is the first year that co-founder and director Alan Gow considered entering the Professional Paraplanner awards, he says. “We’ve never put in for an award before, but we’ve never had this team before. There has been a lot of trial and error along the way. But the people we have in the team at the moment are the people we’ve been looking for all this time, and with the recent changes we have made to the business, made it the right time to do it.”

Joint Argonaut founder Julie Pipe retired earlier in 2023 and the remaining four person team has continued working on the culture of the business to make it a great place to work. “Anyone can make suggestions for changes and improvements and have them taken seriously. We are learning off each other. It’s not one way traffic like it is in many firms,” Alan says.

Asked how Argonaut has got the culture right, paraplanner Christina Georgiou says: “It’s recognising that it’s not about recruiting people with technical knowledge. Most paraplanners will have decent technical knowledge and if they don’t it can be taught and learned. It’s about who fits in and has the same approach and mindset as you do.”

For a paraplanning firm, she adds, “you need people who are concerned about doing the right thing and getting a good outcome for the end client, and everyone here has that approach.”

It’s also about nurturing and developing the team once you have it, Alan adds. “We all work virtually, so we increased the number of team



Alan Gow and Christina Georgiou accept the award from David Rolland, Intermediary Client Manager, Baillie Gifford

meetings to daily. We have face-to-face time every day, we get to talk about what’s happening in our lives, before we talk about work. It really effects the relationships because it’s how you get to know people as people. It helps also when people go through difficult times, you can provide the support and flexibility you know they need.”

Argonaut operates a flat management structure. “There is no hierarchy at all, which means we can all say what we feel without thinking we might upset the boss,” says Christina. “And that means there’s no office politics, which we’ve all experienced in previous jobs,” Alan adds. “That’s a sign of having a good group of people working together.”

Team meetings include sharing technical points from recent cases, industry news and other collective learning. “We share feedback from clients and add the positives to our ‘Wins’ list; our record of what we’ve achieved. We close

the meeting by asking for feedback, issues etc. There’s often something we can improve – it’s ongoing incremental steps,” Alan says. “We’ve also started a ‘Yes...and...’ game, where we have unrestricted thinking to come up with outlandish notions. Then we look for the positives and expand on them to create useable ideas.”

The firm offers a generous working package with flexible working, life insurance, income protection and medical insurance. “We want everyone to feel protected and valued,” Alan explains. “And we’re a transparent business, with everyone able to track our progress towards monthly targets and benefitting from quarterly profit-based bonuses. This is because we only achieve those profits by working together and helping each other.”

Another reason the team work so well, Christina says, “is that everyone knows what they have to do and are allowed to get on and do it. There is no micro-managing.”

Alan concludes: “When you work with people every day like this, they are like a second family. We work hard but we have fun. Before the end of our morning meeting, someone is usually snorting with laughter or complaining that their cheeks hurt. Relationships, perhaps more than anything else, have the power to support us through life’s ups and downs. They are an important part of a great team culture.”

“When you work with people every day like this, they are like a second family. We work hard but we have fun”

PARAPLANNER OF THE YEAR (IN-HOUSE)

In association with



**Catharine Dodd, paraplanner,
Saltus Financial Planning**

With some 10 years of paraplanning under her belt, Catharine Dodd, paraplanner with Saltus Financial Planning, has developed her skills over the years to take on not just the more complex, holistic cases for the firm but also project work.

She started in financial services after A Levels by googling wealth advice firms in her local area and contacting them for work experience. One took her on and liked her so much they offered her a job in their administration department. Having worked on a robo-advice project for the firm, she then moved into paraplanning. "I shall always be grateful to the firm for giving me the opportunities they did," she says.

Then eight years ago, she moved to Saltus.



**Ranila Ravi-Burslem, Intermediary
Distribution Director, Scottish Widows,
presents the award to Catharine**

"I'd only been paraplanning for less than a year but with just three paraplanners on the team, I was pitched straight in to writing complex reports. I remember those first cases very well; it was a real baptism of fire."

Now the firm has over 20 paraplanners and offices around the south and south west, from

London to Bristol. Catharine works directly for two advisers based in the head office near Fareham in Hampshire. "We work a pod system," she explains, "with paraplanners, financial advisers, and client services working together." The paraplanners are responsible for the case management. "We have responsibility for managing the pod and each case from start to sign off. We make sure everything is progressing smoothly and deal with any roadblocks that may occur."

Catharine also undertakes what she refers to as the 'housekeeping' for the paraplanning team, creating and maintaining the wording library and the templates for the team. She has also taken on projects for the business. "The personal advice desk project, for example, was one where we looked at how we could properly serve lower value clients cost effectively."

Of the award win, she says: "It was absolutely amazing to win. I'm feel honoured both as a paraplanner and on behalf of Saltus."

OUTSOURCED PARAPLANNER OF THE YEAR

In association with



Alison Neale, Principle Paraplanning

Alison Neale spent 10 years in banking before setting up as a freelance paraplanner in 2012. "I left college and went to work in a bank, doing the usual jobs like cashiering. I was also referring leads to the financial advisers and when one of the advisers went on maternity leave, she said she thought I would make a good financial adviser and I should try my hand at advising," Alison says. "So I started doing my FPCs and at 19 was the youngest financial adviser in the bank. I worked for another couple of banks and then moved into sales management, which involved a lot of technical checking of cases."

When made redundant in 2012, she looked at what she wanted to do next and decided it was



**Alison accepts the award from
Stephen McPhillips, Technical Sales Director,
Dentons Pensions Management**

paraplanning. "The technical side of the job I'd had was the bit I liked the best, rather than the sales side, so I decided to put my name out there to see what would happen."

The business grew quickly and having spent some time freelancing, Alison set up a limited company, working with other freelancers and

growing the business that way. In 2023 she became a co-director of Principled Paraplanning, joining the business set up by Jon Willmott.

"After 10 years running a business on my own, I could see the advantages of joining with Jon and taking Principled much further. The benefits for financial advice firms of using outsourced paraplanners are growing as firms are looking to become more efficient and cost effective. With outsourcing you get access to highly qualified and experienced paraplanners, when you want them and without the issues that come from employment. We're now developing the business and growing the team of paraplanners."

Alison remains a hands-on paraplanner but the move has allowed her to take a partial step back and look to the future. "Paraplanning is my passion and I can now look at how we can work better and more efficiently and build a really successful business."

PARAPLANNER TEAM LEADER OF THE YEAR

In association with



Aleksandra Sasin, Navigatus

Having grown the Navigatus team from one to eight paraplanners within six years, Aleksandra has had to balance quickly growing a successful business and building the culture she wanted at the outsourced paraplanning firm. “Years ago I was promoted from senior paraplanner to running a team of 20, without training. It was not a situation I wanted to be in again. So when I set up my own business I decided to work on my own for a while,” she explains. But she got busy very quickly, and soon had to take on paraplanners of her own to help deal with the workload. “So I had to learn the skills to be a good team leader, as well as a business owner.”

Going through that learning process, she built up the confidence, she says, “to build my team



Martin Rooks, Head of Advisory and Partnership Marketing, Fidelity Adviser Solutions presents the award to Aleksandra

in the way I would like to work, and to look after people in the way I would like to be looked after in a workplace setting.”

Over the years there have been mistakes “and things I could have done differently, but I

learned a lot,” she says. One of those learnings was that key to having a great team is to hire people where the personalities fit the team. “Personality is probably more important than qualifications because exams we can easily address. We want the people on the Navigatus bus to be the right people; which seat they sit in comes later.”

Two of the most important values for leading a team successfully, she believes, are first, having an open and safe environment where everyone knows they can raise issues and be listened to. “You can’t expect your team to share if you don’t share as well.”

And second, knowing your own values and having self-awareness. “Everyone is different and will lead in a different way. Know yourself and what type of team leader you are and what works best for you,” Aleksandra advises.

ADMINISTRATOR OF THE YEAR

In association with



Maria Mushtaq, administrator, Holden and Partners

Maria Mushtaq has five years under her belt as an administrator, two of which have been at London-based Holden and Partners. The financial planning team has a support structure which is a tri-partite system – the financial planners are supported by the paraplanners and an administrator. Day-to-day Maria will tackle basic administration, data input, client queries and compiling of review packs, but she will also be involved in more complex areas, such as CGT planning, insurance quotes, and working out if the client has any tax planning liabilities. “It makes the job more technical and interesting,” Maria says.

Anyone in the company can also be involved in a range of project teams, covering areas



Glen Sweet, Head of Distribution, Transact, presents the award to Maria

such as charity work, health and safety and marketing. Maria explains: “This is voluntary and people can take part as much as they wish. It brings a different dimension to how we can participate in the company.”

Maria believes that generally speaking, administrators are under-valued in terms of the service they provide to clients. “Administrators

do the essential work that no-one else wants to do but their role is far more technical and pivotal to a business than many people appreciate,” she says.

“The administrator’s work in gathering information and accurately inputting it is the foundation on which the paraplanner and the financial adviser are basing their work. They implement all the things that are important to the client. They ensure that everything the adviser has agreed with the client has been carried out. It reassures the client that the firm is looking after them.”

She also believes it is important for administrators to keep learning to improve their capabilities. Currently, she is half way through the exams needed to attain her Diploma.

“The exams give you basic technical knowledge but they enable you to better understand the advice given. That’s important if we are to do our best for the client.”

NEW PARAPLANNER OF THE YEAR

In association with



Morgan Leask, 7IM

Barely a year into her paraplanning role at 7IM and Morgan Leask has already made her mark, showing that new joiners can have a positive effect not just on outcomes for end clients but within the business also. During her finance, investment and risk degree she wrote her dissertation on behavioural finance. She found work placement in the administration department of a local financial advice firm and joined 7IM as a paraplanner in 2022.

The 7IM paraplanner team consists of four paraplanners and a team leader, working on a pooled basis for four financial advisers. Not only has the team been very welcoming, she says, but it operates a ‘buddy system’ for new joiners. “That has really helped me learn on the job and grow in confidence. We also have a ‘huddle’ meeting



Morgan accepts the award from Les Cameron, Head of Technical, M&G Wealth

every Wednesday, with the financial planners and client services team, where we talk through the work; it’s a very collaborative environment.”

She encourages new paraplanners to learn not just the technical aspects of the job but how the business works and to get involved. Morgan believes new paraplanners can bring a fresh perspective to processes and shouldn’t

be afraid to question. As an example, she says: “I’m into processes and I looked at the annual report letters we were sending out and asked why each of them were different depending who sent them. It wasn’t a massive change to move to standard format; it was just something that hadn’t been looked at. Small changes like this are where I think new paraplanners can make a difference.” Morgan is now part of the project and testing team, which is looking at processes and communications.

For new paraplanners who have suggestions but feel nervous about raising them, she says: “Just have a conversation. I’ve found people respond to honest and constructive questions.”

As a financial services career, she believes paraplanning stands out for a simple reason: “Financial planning is real life; it’s about helping to change peoples’ lives. I’d recommend anyone who is people-focussed to try paraplanning as a career.”

PERSONALITY OF THE YEAR

In association with



Siân Davies Cole and Chloe Phillips of The Paraplanner Club

Siân Davies Cole and Chloe Phillips established The Paraplanner Club on 17 January 2021, International Mentoring Day, as a mentoring scheme designed by paraplanners for paraplanners. “I looked around me and could see paraplanners struggling because they were not being managed properly, had no career path, were in the wrong job for their skills, and I could see there was a need for some type of mentoring scheme,” says Siân. She put a post on a social forum and Chloe immediately came back to her.

Over two years on and the Club has between 20 and 25 mentors, regularly mentoring between one and three paraplanners each a month. “When we started out, we thought it would just



Siân Davies Cole and Chloe Phillips accept the award from Nick Britton, Head of Intermediary Communications, AIC

be the two of us but it soon became apparent that we needed more mentors,” Chloe says. “Since then, so many people have stepped up to volunteer their time, it has been great.”

Paraplanners are able to book mentoring sessions, typically of an hour, to talk through any issues they may have at work, or in their

work/life balance. They are allocated a mentor who can best help with the questions or issues they have raised. All conversations are held in accordance with a signed agreement and in the strictest confidence. There is no cost to paraplanners using the service.

Typical areas raised are practical work situations, handling an issue with a manager or colleague, where to source technical information, exam help, through to career guidance such as how to become a paraplanner, team leader or help in defining career goals.

“We all have questions or tricky issues or go through difficult patches in our working lives and having the ear and guidance from someone who has probably gone through or seen similar experiences can help massively,” Siân says.

“It’s about giving paraplanners a safe space to talk privately with someone and receive guidance and support.”

PROVIDER AWARDS WINNERS 2023

The *Professional Paraplanner* provider awards are designed to highlight the companies that paraplanners feel have given them the best in products and services over the past year.

We have 18 categories, decided on with paraplanners, to cover the areas of importance to paraplanners in their day-to-day roles. These range from the providers giving best service when onboarding new clients or servicing existing clients, through those providing technical and training support, technology and software, to the asset managers delivering on investment, and the pension providers who

paraplanners feel have the best products and supporting admin services.

There are clear qualities and standards that paraplanners and administrators are looking for across all the winners and highly commended companies in the 18 categories. These include a high standard of service and support, and responsiveness to queries and requests, online and personal – in other words, they help to make paraplanners’ lives easier.

Providers tell us they highly value the *Professional Paraplanner* awards because paraplanners have to actively nominate them for the award. As one provider put it:

“With the *Professional Paraplanner* awards your reputation and recognition in

the industry is acknowledged by the people you care about the most, the people you deal with on a day-to-day basis. We know paraplanners do vast amounts of legwork and if they find us easy to work with that’s all the endorsement we need.”

This year saw several companies pick up accolades over consecutive years. Other providers looking to make a mark with the paraplanning community should take note. Paraplanners are increasingly being given the responsibility for researching and recommending which products, services and platforms, their advice firms use. Those that recognised this early on are bearing the fruit of their forward thinking.

Methodology

The awards differ from many others in that paraplanners have to nominate their chosen company in each of the categories. Each paraplanner reader is sent a dedicated form on which to nominate a provider in each category. They can also add comment as to why they are nominating that company. The company with the most nominations wins the award. The company with the next highest score is recognised in the Highly Commended category.

Best Overall Service to Paraplanners - New Business

Winner: Quilter

Highly commended: Transact

Best Overall Service to Paraplanners - Existing Business

Winner: Transact

Highly commended: Royal London

Best Technical Support to Paraplanners

Winner: M&G Wealth

Highly commended: abrdn

Best Training Resource for Paraplanners

Winner: Bespoke Training Solutions

Highly commended: Brand Financial Training

Best Research Software

Winner: FE Analytics

Highly commended: Dynamic Planner

Best Back-Office System

Winner: intelligiflo office

Highly commended: Xplan

Best Platform

Winner: Transact

Highly commended: Quilter

Best Third Party Support/Compliance Service

Winner: CATS

Highly commended: Threesixty Services

Best Provider Website

Winner: Fidelity Adviser Solutions

Highly commended: Quilter

Best Independent Service Provider

Winner: Carla Langley,

Langley Compliance and Risk

Highly commended: Melissa Kidd, Motem

Best Active Investment Solution Provider

Winner: Fidelity International

Highly commended: Liontrust Asset Management

Best Passive Investment Solution Provider

Winner: Vanguard

Highly commended: Legal and General Investment Management

Best ESG Investment Solution Provider

Winner: Liontrust Asset Management

Highly commended: EdenTree Investment Management

Best Alternative Investment Provider

Winner: Octopus Investments

Highly commended: Triple Point

Best Outsourced Investment Provider

Winner: Tatton Investment Management

Highly commended: Waverton Investment Management

Best Retirement Solution Provider

Winner: Royal London

Highly commended: Just

Best Full SIPP Provider

Winner: Dentons Pensions Management

Highly commended: AJ Bell

Best Offshore Product Provider

Winner: Utmost Wealth Solutions

Highly commended: Canada Life

There's a hole in your platform

Dear adviser

Dear adviser

Did you know your chosen platform could be draining your client's investment value? Our platform is designed to plug extra holes, to retain as much value as possible.

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BEST OVERALL SERVICE TO PARAPLANNERS – NEW BUSINESS

Quilter

Paraplanners nominating Quilter for the award, described the company as having “a process that is easy to use, streamlined and with someone always on hand to help with questions or problems”.

“That kind of feedback is exactly what we want to hear,” says Ingrid Hunter, Platform Specialist for Quilter. “When we upgraded the platform, ease of use was at the core of the enhancements we made. We worked with advice firms, especially the paraplanners and administrators, to make sure the design was both efficient and intuitive. We also adopted a one-and-done approach to processing, so that wherever possible, paraplanners only have to do something once. A large part of which was the removal of paperwork from most processes.

“We’ve also recently increased our team of platform specialists, people that paraplanners can come to for help and answers. I think we now have the largest dedicated field team of platform specialists in the market, who are available face-to-face or over the phone to help.

“In addition, we have online support, providing ‘How do I...?’ videos and guides as well as a wealth of technical content on Quilter.com.”

Quilter’s migration to its new platform has enhanced its operation and opened up opportunities, Hunters says, including raising Quilter’s profile. Also important is that there have been regular upgrades to the platform since the migration, which will continue as it responds to user wants and needs.

“The main premise of our releases is to make paraplanners, administrators and advisers lives easier,” Hunter says. She points to a number of key changes in the releases that she feels “paraplanners and administrators will appreciate”.

“We’ve made it possible to process more than one application within one submission, for example an ISA, a pension and a bond, within one submission. We’ve also improved the bed and ISA process, removing the need for paperwork, so advice firms can now move money from any GIA into an ISA. These changes are about increasing straight through processing and reducing paperwork.”

In the most recent release, she adds, “we introduced tiered adviser charging. This enables advice firms to set up their own charging structure, setting their own bands for the lower and upper limits, and also the percentage fee. We’ve also included the ability to document expression of wishes online, including cascading nominations, so there is a record on the platform.”

It is user feedback and suggestions that are helping to drive the enhancements, she says. “Paraplanners and administrators who are using the platform all the time will be the ones who find the niggles that they would like changed. They can raise them with us and we’ll do our best to tackle them. Not everything can be done but this does allow paraplanners to take more control and have a platform that works with them.”

Quilter also has a specialist technical team to help support paraplanners in their role, delivering face-to-face, online and via webinars. “They offer support across areas such as tax, trusts and pensions. Their aim is to make the complex clear.”

A key service Quilter offers is helping advice firms identify opportunities where they can add more value to the client, build deeper relationships and also help to build client wealth.

Dealing with personal and confidential information from advisers and clients, security is paramount, Hunter says. “There is constant work going on behind the scenes. We proactively monitor the potential for threats and have an internal programme, which is constantly informing, educating and empowering people within the business in respect of cyber security, to help decrease the risk. It promotes security as part of our culture.”

Asked to sum up what she thinks makes Quilter different in the market and attractive to paraplanners, she says: “I am a recent joiner to the platform, and what struck and attracted me to it was the quality of the platform and what it offers. There is an inclusive culture and a ‘can do’ attitude which is built around wanting to listen and to help and be open to improving things where we can. We are refining with every release.”

On winning the award Hunter says: “It’s fantastic. Thank you to everyone who nominated us. We’re delighted that the effort that has gone into making the platform user friendly is being recognised, by the people using it. Please continue to talk to us because that helps us build future enhancements and can make a positive difference to the platform when you next come to use it.”



Ingrid Hunter, Platform Specialist for Quilter receives the award from PP editor Rob Kingsbury

BEST TECHNICAL SUPPORT

M&G Wealth

Les Cameron, Head of Technical M&G Wealth believes a settled team of five, all of whom are highly experienced and “want to be the best we can be at our jobs”, are what lies at the core of what makes the M&G Wealth technical support stand out in the market – and has seen the team win the Professional Paraplanner award for the seventh year in a row.

Layered on top of those elements are several others. “Something I think we do well is we cover everything. We talk about bonds, trusts, pensions, tax, onshore and offshore and collectives. There are other people in the market providing technical insight but few across as many subjects,” Cameron says.

“We are quick off the mark as well. If something big happens, like a budget, we generally we have an idea of what we think about it quickly, will have something on our technical website overnight and be delivering a webinar on it the following day. There’s always a flurry of headlines when something is issued but then it needs someone with the depth of knowledge to say, ‘this is what was actually said but importantly, this is what it means’. The ‘so what?’ factor.”

The team is highly prolific in its output, which includes webinars, face-to-face seminars (this year including the Professional Paraplanner Technical Insight Seminars) articles and videos, which help to populate the M&G Wealth technical centre. There is also direct access to the team for advisers and paraplanners, who can book an appointment through their M&G Wealth contacts.

The figures are impressive. “In the first six months of 2023, the technical centre had over



Les Cameron, Head of Technical, M&G Wealth, collects the award on behalf of his team

260,000 hits,” Cameron says. “Our account managers and platform consultants are fairly knowledgeable and can answer a lot of questions that come in to them, but last year we still had over 3,000 calls and emails coming into the team. This year we were already at 4,000 by the end of June. In 2022 we delivered at 220 seminars with over 14,000 attendees; this year at the half way stage, we’re already at 200 seminars with 14,000 attendees.

“There is a very real need for our services, particularly to hear about market changes. In April, we had a record breaking webinar, which saw 1800 people tune in to hear about the changes to the Lifetime Allowance. And our main monthly webinar, which we term ‘Techy Thursday’, regularly receives 700 plus attendees.”

In addition to providing insights and information, the tax tools and calculators on the M&G Wealth website – including annual

allowance and bond gain calculators – are also highly popular, with on average, 7,000 downloads across the calculators per month.

Quite often, the team will find they are being asked the same or same type of questions, so to make receiving answers faster for advisers and paraplanners, they have a large repository of frequently asked questions on the website.

The team keeps abreast of the tax and pensions landscape by having feeds from every possible quality information source, especially on tax and pensions, including direct from HMRC, as well as by attending meetings with industry bodies. “A big part of our job is to keep our fingers on the pulse, so that when we hear of changes we can analyse them and quickly provide a view for the market.”

Despite its already impressive engagement with the industry, the technical team is constantly looking at how it can improve or add to what it does. “The website has lots of great content but the structure and navigation are not the best. So we’re working on improving that. It’s looking good so far and I hope we’ll see it in the new year”. Most recently it started the M&G Wealth Technical Group on LinkedIn. “We wanted a way to start discussions with people. We are hoping it will become a technical community where people can ask questions and chat to each other (and us) on technical matters. It’s our way of dipping our toe back into direct access,” Cameron says.

“A big part of our job is to keep our fingers on the pulse, so that when we hear of changes we can analyse them and quickly provide a view for the market”

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BEST TRAINING RESOURCE FOR PARAPLANNERS

Bespoke Training Solutions (BTS)

Paraplanners who nominated BTS for the award, praised the company not just for the training resources it provides but also for “their involvement and support for the paraplanning community”.

Going the extra mile and thinking outside the box are fundamental to the ethos and history of BTS, says Alex Langhorn, Head of Business Support for BTS. “When Luiza Todd and Jeff Scholes established the company 20 years ago they did so in line with three values, which we still have today: Integrity, innovation and choice.

“They saw there was a need for a new and innovative way for CII exam candidates to tackle their studying and achieve success, and which gave candidates options.

“So they looked at what candidates needed and also the challenges they were facing and devised a study programme which gave candidates not just information and study processes but also the confidence to go into the exams fully prepared. BTS has a reputation for providing support that goes beyond study guides and really does walk side-by-side with candidates through the process of study.”

An example of this was the support BTS provided when the CII online exam system crashed at the January RO6 sitting, leaving many candidates unable to take the exam. Alex explains: “Having helped people prepare for the exam, we felt as upset about the situation as the candidates themselves. When the CII reset the exam, in test centres, for two weeks later, we set up a series of webinars, including one for



Natalie Dawes Academy Support Adviser (left) and Lucie Pickavance, Academy Administrator, BTS, receive the award from editor Rob Kingsbury

Professional Paraplanner, to help candidates who needed to prepare for this unexpected situation.”

The BTS exam study proposition – including the STEP process; Study, Train, e-Learn and Practise – also allows people to choose what they need to help them prepare for their exams, Alex says. “We know that different people will need different things from us. Some will want support throughout their exam journey, others will want help with a specific aspect or to complement their study so far. So we let people choose what they want, keeping our resources flexible to meet their needs.”

The pandemic acted as catalyst for BTS, as it made the team realise people were coming to the company for more than just help with exams. “As well as shifting our operations to a totally virtual delivery, which we have built on since, we saw that people were wanting help with far much more. This included advice on joining the

financial advice profession and help with career options,” Alex explains.

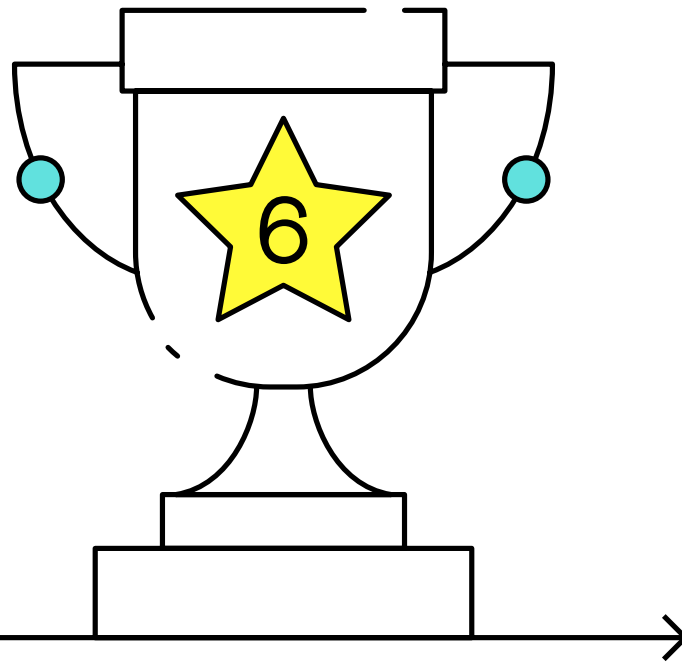
A direct result of this has been the launch of the Careers Zone on the BTS website. “This is an area on the website that people can come to for careers information relating to the financial services industry, including news articles, podcasts, information on the different roles in financial services, forums for exam candidates, employer information and more.

“We’ve taken the informal support we were giving people over the phone and made it part of what we offer. So BTS now provides a far more holistic service for people considering not just taking exams but whether to join the industry and their next career step.”

BTS offers exam study options for a range of CII RO and AF exams, as well as CF6. In the pipeline are JO exam study guides and support. “Our technical team, including Luiza and Jeff, are busy working on these now and hopefully, we will have the first JO modules available before the end of the year,” Alex says. “We’ve expanded the team, with Natalie Dawes and Lucie Pickavance joining the Academy Support Team in the past year and we also have lots of exciting developments planned for the Careers Zone thanks to an in-house web development team headed up by Marc Hawkins. It’s all go here.”

“When Luiza Todd and Jeff Scholes established the company 20 years ago they did so in line with three values: Integrity, innovation and choice”

intelliflo



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BEST BACK OFFICE SOFTWARE PROVIDER

intelliflo office

A primary factor in the success of intelliflo office and a contributing factor in why the back-office software has won this category of the *Professional Paraplanner* awards for the sixth time, “is that we listen to what our customers want and we act on it,” according to Richard Wake, Chief Customer Officer for intelliflo.

“We encourage customer feedback. We have introduced around 50 changes and developments to the system this year alone, that are a direct result of that feedback. This is a very important part of the intelliflo business model – something we call ‘customer inspired change’.

Those changes include everything from larger strategic changes – such as the company’s move to AWS, Amazon’s cloud computing service – to small tweaks to the system.

“Our focus is on our customers. Since we were founded, our CEO Nick Eatock and the rest of the leaders here have maintained a customer-focused culture and vision. We are obsessed with learning where the market is headed and how we best serve customers today and in the future,” Wake adds.

From a paraplanner’s perspective, there have been a number of useful developments over the past year, he says. “We’re constantly trying to make our users’ lives easier. In April we announced that our award-winning cashflow modelling and planning capabilities will now be included within the core intelliflo office system, removing the need to buy additional software, so our customers will have access to the power it provides. This will enable our customers to better serve their clients and illustrate the power of their financial advice with real time, visual cashflow charts and data.

“We are obsessed with learning where the market is headed and how we best serve customers today and in the future”



Rob Kingsbury presents the award to Liam Mills, Strategic Customer Manager (left) and Brimma Jones, Customer Support Analyst, intelliflo

“And that’s not all, we’re constantly evolving the cashflow modelling and planning capabilities, including this year, two-way integration, so paraplanners and administrators only have to key in the data once. And it links in with our document builder, which is a key tool we know paraplanners are using.”

There have also been developments in use of the Personal Finance Portal (PFP) in intelliflo office. “The portal is crucial in delivering safe and secure communication between the advice firm and clients. We launched our new version of the portal in January of this year. It has a completely new framework in how people interact with it and can give a far more personalised experience for clients.

“What we’re also doing is looking at how we can integrate the portal with third-party tools, to help enrich advice firms’ offerings to their clients. One thing we are looking at is the ability to put financial forecasting into clients’ hands to help drive better conversations with advisers and to help gather better information, which again should help paraplanners in their work.”

In June 2023 intelliflo partnered with SS&C Technologies and Hubwise to launch weathlink, a deep integration between the practice management software and the investment platform. “This means paraplanners will only ever need to key a client’s details in once. The client’s advice journey occurs all in intelliflo office, from discovery, cashflow modelling and setting up the client’s plan, to getting the money invested and utilising the client portal,” Wake explains.

“intelliflo has been leading the market when it comes to integration and again, making users lives as easy as possible. We have around 102 integrations at the moment. Our API capabilities and weathlink provides a solution to one of the big issues for the market – platform integration. Hopefully, it is the start of a step change for the market.”

On the horizon, Wake says, is Advice Proposal. “This will provide the ability to undertake document creation throughout the system. Currently, we have a workflow system that takes users on a mapped out journey. What we are doing is empowering our users to create the journey that they want.

“Another big piece of work is on business intelligence and giving advice firms access to the management information they need to help build their businesses, as well as developments for the portal, such as bulk communication.

“Customer-inspired change is the way we will continue to take things forward, and as you’d expect of intelliflo, there are lots of exciting developments to come.”

Professional
Paraplanner
**Awards
2021**

Winner
Best Third Party
Support/Compliance
Service

Professional
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**Awards
2022**

Winner
Best Third Party
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Professional
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“We have used the services of CATS for circa. 20 years and always found them to be reliable and highly professional in their approach and communications with our firm. We very much value their expertise and the fact there is always someone who is available to help and assist us with any regulatory query or concern we may have. I would highly recommend this forward thinking, progressive and dependable firm of compliance consultants should you be thinking of engaging their services”.

Capel Court

BEST THIRD-PARTY SUPPORT/ COMPLIANCE SERVICE

Compliance and Training Solutions (CATS)

CATS achieved their third successive win at the 2023 Professional Paraplanner awards, against tough competition from larger name brands in the market.

Directors Martyn and Mel Holman put their popularity with advice firms and the paraplanners who nominated them for the award, in large part down to their accessibility and hands-on approach. “We’re known for working with our clients,” says Mel. “It’s giving people pragmatic advice rather than just giving them templates to follow. People come to us for advice and guidance as professionals in our field, and we always try to give an answer and not sit on the fence.”

“Also, we’re not selling anything but compliance. That’s our focus,” Martyn adds. “We’re trying to make a difference for the firms we work with. That means we properly roll up our sleeves and get involved. That’s what makes us different and is part of why firms come to us.”

Also important, of course, is the expertise of the team, which has grown to 17. “We’ve built a team of experienced, qualified professionals. Many of them have worked as financial advisers so know the work and the issues that can arise. And we’re on a recruitment drive at the moment.

“People come to us for advice and guidance as professionals in our field, and we always try to give an answer and not sit on the fence”

All our business has come to us through word of mouth recommendations. We think that says a lot about our business too,” Martyn says.

Paraplanners are central to the CATS business. As Mel says: “We work very closely with paraplanners. They are often our main point of contact within firms. They come to us for a variety of things. It could be for advice on a piece of regulation; it could be for a second opinion on an approach they are taking, for example on a piece of due diligence or in relation to a vulnerable client; it could be what needs to go into a report and what doesn’t. We are very much a sounding board for paraplanners. It’s all part of the hands-on approach we offer.”

Over the past year, the company has been continuing its investment into the CATS Hub.

“We’ve brought out a new training zone, which now contains a range of annual knowledge tests advisers and paraplanners can take, from a test on the bribery act, through anti-money laundering,

to materials for a range of different exams. When they pass the test, they automatically receive a certificate of achievement that counts towards their CPD. Then 11 months after they take the test, the individual will get an email reminder to take the test again,” Martyn explains.

“We’ve also on the cusp of launching our new website. Our aim with this is to give our clients everything they need but also reflect that as company we work hard but we play hard too; that there’s a fun approach to us.”

Consumer Duty has been a large part of the work CATS has been undertaking over the past year, not just providing advice but also through newsletter updates, as well as running dedicated webinars and workshops.

The biggest Consumer Duty challenge for firms, Mel believes will be communication. “I can see firms embracing technology more to help with this and being a bit more imaginative; thinking outside the box in the way they communicate things to their clients. Clients are short of time so communications need to engage with them.”

This year the company has taken on its first apprentice, through Skills Edge Training. “We’re really excited about this for the company,” Mel says. “We think it’s important that we bring in new and young talent to the compliance profession. Our new apprentice is driven and ambitious and that’s the kind of person we need to be attracting, not just to CATS but to compliance and the industry as a whole.”

On winning the award, Martyn adds: “This award means so much to us because paraplanners have taken the time to nominate us for the work we do with them. That means a lot. Of course, the pressure is now on to win for the fourth year in a row. But that’s not a bad thing, as I see it, as we all work better under pressure.”



Martyn and Mel Holman, co-directors of CATS receive their award

BEST PROVIDER WEBSITE

Fidelity Adviser Solutions

One way paraplanners reward the firms that they believe deliver the best for them is through the *Professional Paraplanner* awards. Fidelity Adviser Solutions has a long history of supporting the paraplanner community and providing technical details and other information that help paraplanners in their day-to-day role.

The Fidelity Adviser Solutions website offers a dedicated Paraplanner Technical Hub, which delves into the rules and nuances of tax and pensions legislation – a facility that undoubtedly has helped Fidelity win the Best Provider Website award for a third successive year.

“We were talking about this the other day in the office,” says Jackie Boylan, Head of Fidelity Adviser Solutions. “Paraplanners are a fundamental part of financial planning. They are crucial to the research, recommendations and outcomes for clients but to some extent they have been under invested in by the industry. Which is why we think it is important that we help support what they do.”

The strapline of the Hub is ‘Supporting paraplanners in a world of constant change’. Fidelity looks to help paraplanners understand and embrace new regulatory and legislative frameworks, and to put some meaning around change – such as the Lifetime Allowance announcement in the 2023 Budget, Boylan says.

“For us, it’s about responding as fast as we can, using the full technical resources we have at our disposal. And we put out the information in the best way possible. We’ve put together a lot of webinars where our experts explain what’s



Martin Rooks, Head of Advisory and Partnership Marketing receives the award from Rob Kingsbury

happened and what it means for financial planning. We use webinars to reach as many people as we can as quickly as we can.

“We’ve run webinars on things like Consumer Duty, ESG and the Budget changes. And we try to mix it up, so some will be in interview format, some presentations, and we’ll have internal experts like Paul Squirrell as well as bring in external experts too, to talk on specific subjects.”

The hub also provides access to other technical material. “At the moment we have guides and insights on State Pension considerations, and the challenges and strategies in retirement, and we’ll update them as things change.

“We also have our online Pensions Forum, where paraplanners and advisers can ask technical questions and Paul Squirrell, our pension expert, will answer them. We find that there are common

questions and having them answered on the forum can help a lot more people.

“Not many companies are providing the level of technical support we do. We think it’s important that we use our in-house expertise where we can, to help achieve the result we’re all aiming at, better service and outcomes for clients.”

When navigating x-many websites during a day, having one that delivers, in the words of one paraplanner, “clear navigation and quality technical content”, is a boon. The design principle behind the website build, Boylan says, “is the principle we use with everything we develop and that is to look at it through the users eyes; what are they trying to do and what’s the best way to help them do that.”

“We do lot of ethnographic research, through which we put people into adviser offices to look at how people are using technology and working, so we can fully understand what’s needed. We then co-design a solution with users and test it to make sure it works as is wanted. Once live we can see how the website is being used and our continual improvement teams continue to monitor and make enhancements as we go on. So there is a lot of technical analysis behind why the website works as it does.”

On winning the award, Boylan says: “It is absolutely awesome to win the award for the third time. Thank you to all the paraplanners who nominated us. We genuinely appreciate the support and the wonderful recognition that this award provides.”

“Paraplanners are a fundamental part of financial planning... but to some extent they have been under invested in by the industry. Which is why we think it is important that we help support what they do”

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Adviser Solutions



BEST ACTIVE INVESTMENT SOLUTION PROVIDER

Fidelity International

Highly commended for this award in 2022, this year Fidelity International scooped the award for the Best Active Investment Solution. As at the end of June 2023, the company was offering investment solutions and services, and retirement solutions to more than 2.87 million* customers globally and had UK retail assets under management of £62.5bn*.

Dennis Pellerito, Head of Wholesale, UK, believes what makes Fidelity stand out in what is a very crowded asset management market, are two key elements. First, is that the company is privately held, meaning it is not beholden to the short-term needs of external shareholders. “This enables us to truly build products and services for our clients’ long-term needs,” says Pellerito. “Investment management and related services are our only business, and management compensation is based on long-term performance delivering for our clients.”

The second is Fidelity’s depth of expertise, with global research capabilities and over 460* investment professionals around the world.

“Investing requires a continuous research commitment to build a deep understanding of what is driving industries and individual businesses. Fidelity is committed to generating proprietary insights and our analysts work together across asset classes, for example, combining insights from equity, credit, macro and quantitative research, to form a 360-degree view on the health and prospects of companies,” Pellerito says. “Wherever in the world we are investing, our success is underpinned by our deep commitment to proprietary research and our focus on delivering sustainable investment returns, while managing our impact on society and the environment.

“This leverages our powerful global capabilities – including company access, regional and sector collaboration, and asset class expertise – focussed on delivering superior returns and meeting client objectives.”

Paraplanners particularly appreciate quality customer service, and this is a focus of Fidelity,



Pellerito says. “We always aim to be within easy reach and want to make sure queries are answered as quickly and easily as possible.

“Fidelity funds are widely available on all UK platforms so information about our products should be readily available. Any queries regarding platform availability – or any other requests for information regarding our range or upcoming events – can be directed to our dedicated customer service teams.

“Through our online My Fidelity service, paraplanners can also receive automated notifications for their selected funds every time new information is published, covering updates to key documents, reports & accounts and manager insights.”

Fidelity also offers paraplanners regular market insights and technical training sessions both in-person and via online meetings. “These sessions aim to break down the big macro topics of the moment and explain what they mean for both portfolio construction and the wider market environment,” Pellerito explains. “We also provide support for any fund specific queries they may have when writing reports or building portfolios. We aim to make paraplanners lives as easy as possible.”

When it comes to managing its impact on society and the environment, Fidelity’s approach to its own corporate sustainability will resonate

with paraplanners. “As stewards of our clients’ assets, the asset management industry in particular has a weighty responsibility to ensure its capital allocation decisions reflect this transition to a more sustainable future. We cannot do it alone, but in collaboration with others, we can make a real difference,” Pellerito says.

“In 2020 our Corporate Sustainability Committee created a first set of company 2024 goals, which are organised under four priority areas: the environment, the workplace, our supply chain and the communities in which we operate.

“These goals will provide us with a roadmap towards longer term goals, such as our commitment to reduce company-wide operational carbon emissions to net zero by 2030. We believe it is imperative for us to be transparent not only about where we want to be but also how we intend to get there.”

On the award win, Pellerito says: “It’s been a challenging few years for the industry and financial markets, but we have navigated this extremely successfully. I am incredibly proud to be part of such an extraordinary team; everyone has stepped up and gone above and beyond to provide outstanding service to our clients. So we’re delighted this year to have been awarded the ‘Best Active Investment Solution Provider’ by paraplanners.”

* Source: Fidelity International

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BEST FULL SIPP PROVIDER

Dentons Pensions Management

Dentons was founded in 1979 providing consultancy services for SSAS arrangements following the implementation of Inland Revenue (HMRC) rules in the same year. Since then Dentons has evolved to offer SIPP, initially for more sophisticated investment requirements, including an expertise in commercial property, and more recently for simpler SIPP for clients whose investment needs are met by a single investment platform or fund manager from a pre-approved list.

“We grew our reputation on serving clients who needed a more complex arrangement, but now we have around a 50% split in new business between complex and simpler SIPP types,” says David Fox, Director of Sales & Marketing at Dentons.

As the SIPP market has grown over the years, so SIPP business has become Denton’s mainstay product, “while we are also adding to our SSAS book year on year,” Fox says.

He stresses that Dentons very much sticks to its knitting, focussed on delivering quality SIPP and SSAS products and service for the intermediary market.

“Fundamentally, we’re providing an administration service, which is at the core everything we do, and why people keep coming back to us, is personal service,” says Fox.

“For example, if a paraplanner puts business with us they know that they will get a named administrator assigned to them who they can contact to asks questions, and when they call us, a real person will answer the phone.

“Another reason is integrity. As we’ve seen over the past few years, the industry has suffered from a history where SIPP providers have over promised, or never been profitable, and/or allowed investors to put their money into risky assets without robust due diligence having been undertaken by the provider first.

“From outset, Dentons has always focussed on doing the right thing, running a profitable business, and looking after our clients. It’s why we are one of the few SIPP providers that doesn’t have a worrying level of exposure to toxic assets.”



“We charge flat fees (rather than a percentage of the fund value) for a personalised service, so advisers always know what their clients will pay, and we offer solutions for a range of clients and client needs.”

In the past year, Dentons has enhanced its single portfolio SIPP offering. “This is a simple, straightforward product, which can be applied for online. It has digital signatures and has been warmly embraced by advisers and paraplanners for their clients,” says Fox.

“We’re also making more client documents available via our secure portal” adds Stephen McPhillips, Technical Sales Director. “Clients can phone us for information if they prefer, or they can easily log on to the secure Dentons SIPP portal and get a host of information at their fingertips whenever they need it.”

Fox adds: “We are pretty nimble too. If a paraplanner wanted, for example, a comparison document, we could quickly put that together and have it signed off by Compliance. We’re looking to make paraplanners and advisers’ lives as easy as possible. We’re not a ‘that’s what’s available, take it or leave it’ set up.”

Dentons also provides a comprehensive due diligence document, McPhillips says. “It is a heavy piece of reading but it contains everything a paraplanner might need to know about Dentons when researching and justifying why they should use us.

“And our business development managers and sales support teams can help take paraplanners through the new business process.”

Another service offered is for a member of the Dentons team to accompany the adviser to meet with the client, points out McPhillips. “We can be there to offer technical support, but not advice, face-to-face if they need us. We realise advisers and paraplanners may not be doing complex SIPP or SSAS business on a regular basis, including commercial property purchase, whereas this is what we do, so we can be their technical expert to help guide them through the process.”

With consolidation continuing to occur, there are fewer and fewer SIPP providers in the market. The challenge for the paraplanners and advisers is to decide which of the providers in the market are going to be around in the future, and thereby avoiding foreseeable harm under the new Consumer Duty rules, Fox says. “What they need to be looking for are profitable companies that are well run and have the capability and desire from a financial and regulatory point of view to remain committed in the market. Financial stability and service standards are key.”

On Dentons’ award win, McPhillips says: “We’d like to thank everyone who nominated us. We are fully committed to the paraplanner market and enjoy coming out to meet paraplanners as part of the Technical Insight Seminars. We’re looking forward to meeting more paraplanners at the autumn events from September.”

Champions of paraplanners



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BEST OUTSOURCED INVESTMENT FIRM

Tatton Investment Management

In a very competitive field, Tatton Investment Management has impressed paraplanners sufficiently to have received the accolade of Best Outsourced Investment Firm for the third year running. The investment manager celebrated its 10th anniversary in January 2023. It established itself in the market as an alternative to traditional discretionary fund managers by using investment platforms to administer client's portfolios, enabling an investment strategy that didn't require transferring any assets and kept fees down by only charging for the investment management services.

With a charge of 0.15% per annum for the MPS the firm set out to prove that using a professional investment management firm did not need to be difficult or expensive. It was an approach that "blew open the doors to reveal what investors were actually paying their investment managers", the firm says.

Roddi Vaughan-Thomas, Head of Communications and Marketing, believes the company's culture of responsiveness and willingness to help, are what have differentiated it in the market, enabling the relatively small asset manager to win awards.

"In the investment world performance has to be a given. So where we work hard is on the service. We listen and we try really hard to help. We are available and accessible and we always channel things through the advice firm.

"Our investment performance is consistent; we're quite conservative, we don't take massive bets and we're top quartile in all of the risk bands. Our positioning with advice firms is to work with them and in harmony with the long-term goals and financial plans that investors have agreed with their adviser."

"We listen and we try really hard to help. We are available and accessible and we always channel things through the advice firm"



It helps also that the company has no interests other than its MPS and DFM investment management propositions. "So we're not distracted by trying to manage or sell anything else," Vaughan-Thomas says. "We're positioned carefully to always support the advice firm and because we can't take client money ourselves, the relationship we have with advice firms is more relaxed."

With this established base level of service, Tatton can work on improving the service "in ways others simply don't have the time or inclination to do," Vaughan-Thomas says.

"We've worked with platforms for so long the areas where paraplanners and financial advisers encounter challenges we've seen hundreds of times, so it's really intuitive for us to be able to help. We're also very approachable. We are very flat in terms of access, there is no hierarchy in terms of who does what. If someone rings up wanting to speak to the CEO, the CIO or the investment team, they can. Culturally we are willing to help."

And the service focus is at individual advice firm level. "We've concentrated a lot on service. If an

IFA wants a webinar from our CEO or CIO, we'll create it for them. If they want charts, we'll put them together. Not many companies are rigged up to do that for one firm. We are."

Tatton has also been developing its portal to enhance the service level. "Using our in-house technology and software team we're launching new fact sheet functionality that is focussed on the individual investor. A fact sheet is there to provide the consumer with the ability to see if their fund manager is doing what they are supposed to do. With our portal, rather than a generic fact sheet, the paraplanner can log on to the portal, click on the portfolio and then can create a fact sheet for each client, based on the time they've been invested. When the adviser meets the client, they then have a fact sheet that is personal to that client. We are introducing similar functionality with our quarterly reports.

"For firms that co-brand or white label with us, we work with them so the brochures have the look and feel of the firm. Likewise with the portal, that can be made to feel like it's the firm's portal, rather than Tatton's.

"It's all about providing a level of service that is over and above the rest of the industry."

On the award win, Vaughan-Thomas says: "It's genuinely brilliant. With the *Professional Paraplanner* awards your reputation and recognition in the industry is acknowledged by the people you care about the most, the people you deal with on a day-to-day basis. We know paraplanners do vast amounts of legwork and if they find us easy to work with that's all the endorsement we need."



Professional
Paraplanner
Awards
2023

Winner
Best Offshore
Product Provider

BEST OFFSHORE PRODUCT PROVIDER 2023, 2021, 2019 & 2018

Committed to supporting paraplanners
and their clients with a focus on service
and technical excellence.

As Utmost Wealth Solutions continues to grow,
we look forward to maintaining this support
for the paraplanner profession.

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Registered Office: King Edward Bay House, King Edward Road, Onchan, Isle of Man, IM991NU, British Isles.
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BEST OFFSHORE PRODUCT PROVIDER

Utmost Wealth Solutions

With over 35 years' experience in the industry, Utmost Wealth Solutions has built a strong foundation of knowledge and expertise in the international wealth solutions market. A fact reflected in the company's fourth win in this category of the *Professional Paraplanner* awards.

"Utmost Wealth Solutions aims to excel in product offering, adviser support and customer experience," says David Matthews, Head of Sales UK & Europe (Expat). "We offer a range of investment products and support services along with in-house trustee services – a unique position in our market – and extensive expert technical support. We are focused on working with paraplanners to provide intelligent, tax-efficient solutions and to help clients manage and pass on their wealth."

Paraplanners are looking for two key things that make their lives easier – good quality, accessible technical information and a highly responsive service. Utmost Wealth Solutions fulfils those in a number of ways, Matthews says.

"We are committed to providing quality service in person and online. We have a dedicated UK team of seven Regional Sales Managers (RSMs) and a Key Partner Relationship Manager. There is also a Global Wealth Specialist focused on the UK market with expertise in portability for UK-based clients who may move overseas at a later date. The RSMs have responsibility for liaising with advice firms, through face-to-face or virtual meetings, to ensure that at an early stage they can assist with planning considerations for clients."

Further support is delivered by the Fitch 'A' rated company's UK technical team, notably through bespoke CPD-qualifying training courses for individual businesses on key industry topics. "The Utmost technical team of 15 has over 280 years' combined expertise and is focussed on delivering technical support in each of Utmost's core markets," Matthews says. "This includes product, tax, legal and estate planning experts with qualifications spanning legal, accountancy, taxation, financial planning and trust and estate practice."

Within the overall team, is a dedicated UK technical unit of five, who are available for advisers with UK-based clients, with support from wider international expertise in the department should it be required.

In addition, the team runs a schedule of webinars each year. A total of 11 events took place in 2022 with over 4,000 attendees in total.

Matthews adds: "When it comes to placing new business, the Utmost Welcome Team carries on this commitment to making life as simple as possible. This dedicated new business team is a multi-skilled unit that is committed to guiding advisers in the UK through the process of writing new business.

"The ethos of the Welcome Team is to ensure that the right people with the right skills and knowledge are on hand to issue business as quickly as possible. Working to fully understand each case, the team will assess and agree in advance any specific requirements. This means even very technical or complicated cases can be issued more efficiently by people that know what is required."

The UK has a highly complex taxation and regulatory environment and there can be numerous challenges that paraplanners may face when serving clients requiring offshore products. In addition, families may be based in multiple jurisdictions. There is also increased mobility of clients, meaning financial plans

can need to be reviewed and adjusted as client circumstances change.

Utmost offers solutions in the UK via its businesses in the Isle of Man and Ireland, Matthews says. These include the Evolution and the Estate Planning Bond, and through Ireland, the Selection and the Generation Planning Bond, and the Delegation and Private Wealth Portfolio, which are discretionary managed portfolio bonds.

"The range of solutions, enables paraplanners and advisers to consider the most appropriate approach depending on each client's circumstances Matthews says. "For example, portability may be an important consideration, in which case having a policy that can potentially be endorsed to meet the taxation and regulatory requirements of a new jurisdiction may be an important requirement."

A range of trust deeds is available, and Utmost's trust advisory service can help paraplanners when reviewing existing trusts, Matthews adds.

"Unique in our market is the provision of in-house professional trustee services. Staffed by experienced trust professionals, our Trustee Solutions service can ensure that settlor wishes can be fulfilled, while removing the onerous regulatory and technical burden from lay trustees. A further benefit is that continuity of trustees is also assured."



Tim Coleman, Key Partner Relationship Manager accepts the award from Rob Kingsbury

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RESEARCH
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Address

80 Coleman Street, London EC2R 5BJ
T: +44 (0)20 7104 2235 **E:** info@researchinfinance.co.uk
W: professionalparaplanner.co.uk

Editorial

Editor

Rob Kingsbury
E: robkingsbury@
researchinfinance.co.uk

Designer

Pascal Don Design
E: pascal.don@mac.com
Editorial inquiries : editorial@
researchinfinance.co.uk

Events

Event Manager

Louisa Hooper
T: +44 (0) 7990 823423
E: louisahooper@
researchinfinance.co.uk

Management

Founding Director

Toby Finden-Crofts
T: +44 (0) 20 7104 2236
E: tobyfindencrofts@
researchinfinance.co.uk

Founding Director

Richard Ley
T: +44 (0) 20 7104 2239
E: richardley@
researchinfinance.co.uk

Commercial Director

Mick Hrabe
T: 44 (0) 207 104 2210
E: mickhrabe@
researchinfinance.co.uk

Advertising and sponsorship enquiries:
sales@researchinfinance.co.uk

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