

Professional Paraplanner Awards 2020

In association with

Parmenion 

BEST PROVIDER WEBSITE FUNDSNETWORK

There are two fundamental reasons why paraplanners nominated FundsNetwork for this year's award. The first is the platform's recognition of the importance of paraplanners and admin/support teams in the industry and the second is the website itself, including a wealth of technical information and other learning resources available.

"Our commercial success is built on our client-centricity – and by client I mean the adviser, the paraplanner and support staff too – and delivering the solutions and experiences that they need," says Jackie Boylan, Head of FundsNetwork.

"It is easy to say that but it has to be at the heart of what we do, and it has to permeate our entire culture, from our client-facing staff through to the back-office, whether a member of staff ever meets a client or not."

Over the past 18 months that client-centric focus has seen the platform pursue a programme of research, testing and development which is done with input across its range of users. "We don't build solutions internally, based on what we think, we build them with our clients, starting with the issues for advice firms from their perspective, from research through prototyping, iteration to delivery. This includes research with our potential clients too, so we know what is important to them."

Two major projects in the past year, Jackie says, have included Client Reporting and website enhancements. "Client Reporting uses what we term a human-



Jackie Boylan, Head of FundsNetwork

centred design approach. We researched how advice firms are using our reports with their clients, the type of information they need, the depth or simplicity of the information required, and we designed the solution to meet the differing needs of individual firms and their clients."

"We've also undertaken a big piece of work on the website, delivering further enhancements and ease of navigation. This has been received really favourably, which, we believe, is down to the research and testing we do before we go live."

As well as research and testing in development, FundsNetwork undertakes a twice yearly relationship survey and receives daily input from staff in the field, as well as online feedback, where every time users go on to the website they can rate it for ease and satisfaction of the experience and leave comments. "That is monitored real-time," Jackie says.

The FundsNetwork website hosts a large amount of technical and support material which is available via the Technical matters hub. A recent addition is a series of videos aimed at helping those taking the AF1 exam. The hub includes a dedicated Paraplanner Technical Hub, which currently includes 46 videos on retirement planning, as well as articles on compliance and regulation and an "Ask an expert" facility, where paraplanners can ask questions and receive an answer from one of the platform's technical specialists.

This reflects FundsNetwork's recognition, Jackie says, "...of the importance of paraplanners in the industry. We want to engage with them and provide information, support and training to help paraplanners fulfil their role as best they can. And it's not just technical content, it's the soft skills and the leadership skills as well. That's why we want to be involved in both Professional Paraplanner's Technical Insight and Team Leader seminars."

Over the next six to 12 months Jackie says there are number of developments that will be delivered, including enhancements to the DFM proposition, increasing the number of funds that can be held in model portfolios, reporting enhancements, automated split fee payments and improvements to the decumulation offering, "an area which is continuing to grow in importance". Other developments include further enhancements to the user experience on the secure website, API integrations "we believe this is the way of the future and for adviser firm efficiencies over the coming years", as well as a focus on cash and ESG.

Receiving the award, Jackie says: "Supporting paraplanners has been such a strong focus for FundsNetwork over the past few years, so knowing that to win the award we had to be nominated by paraplanners is really pleasing."

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