

Your PFS: moving into 'The Future'



Personal
Finance
Society

Standards. Professionalism. Trust.

2023
Annual Report

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Our vision

“Our vision is that PFS professionals build a world which delivers ever greater financial resilience for individuals and societies more broadly.”

Our mission statement

“Our purpose is to lead the financial planning community towards higher levels of professionalism exhibited through technical knowledge, client service and ethical practice.”

About us

The Personal Finance Society (PFS) is the pre-eminent professional membership body in financial planning. It represents around 40,000 members across the UK and internationally. Its core purpose is to serve the public by guiding the advice profession. It promotes the highest standards of professionalism by setting the standards for technical knowledge, customer service and ethical practice across the entire financial planning community.

To achieve its aims, the Society provides its members with a programme of continuing professional development (CPD), relevant qualifications, learning materials, support services and many other practical benefits. Benefiting from the CII's Royal Charter, its primary objective is to secure and justify public confidence and trust in its membership and the profession more broadly.

The PFS is a private company limited by guarantee and is a subsidiary company of the Chartered Insurance Institute (CII).

As an Accredited Body licensed by the Financial Conduct Authority, the CII oversees the qualifications status, adherence to its ethical code, and continuing professional development of PFS members who require a Statement of Professional Standing (SPS), an annual licence required by Retail Investment Advisers. These functions have been regulated in the United Kingdom since December 2012, when the Retail Distribution Review (RDR) came into force.

The objectives of the PFS are prescribed in the company's Articles of Association:

- To promote and facilitate the provision of financial advice relating to personal and corporate investment planning, life assurances, pensions, personal general insurances, mortgages, taxation, and trusts.
- To educate persons involved in the giving of such financial advice.
- To disseminate information and opinions relating to such financial advice.
- To promote professional development of persons involved in the giving of such financial advice.

Membership statistics

39,352 members

Revenue from PFS membership subscriptions and services for the year was **£7.21m**, a **4%** decrease on 2022



26
PFS regions

Membership Level	31 December 2023	31 June 2024
Student member	6,176	6,039
CertPFS	3,122	2,995
DipPFS	21,670	21,501
APFS (Associate)	4,735	4,798
FPFS (Fellow)	3,962	4,019
Chartered Financial Planner	8,159	8,310
TOTAL	39,665	39,352

Our history

2004

- PFS formed as a result of the merger of the Society of Financial Advisers (SOFA), which was previously the financial services arm of the CII, and the Life Assurance Association.

2005

- Chartered Financial Planner status launched to help consumers recognise experienced advisers committed to high professional standards

2018

- Mutual recognition agreement signed with European Financial Planning Association

2017

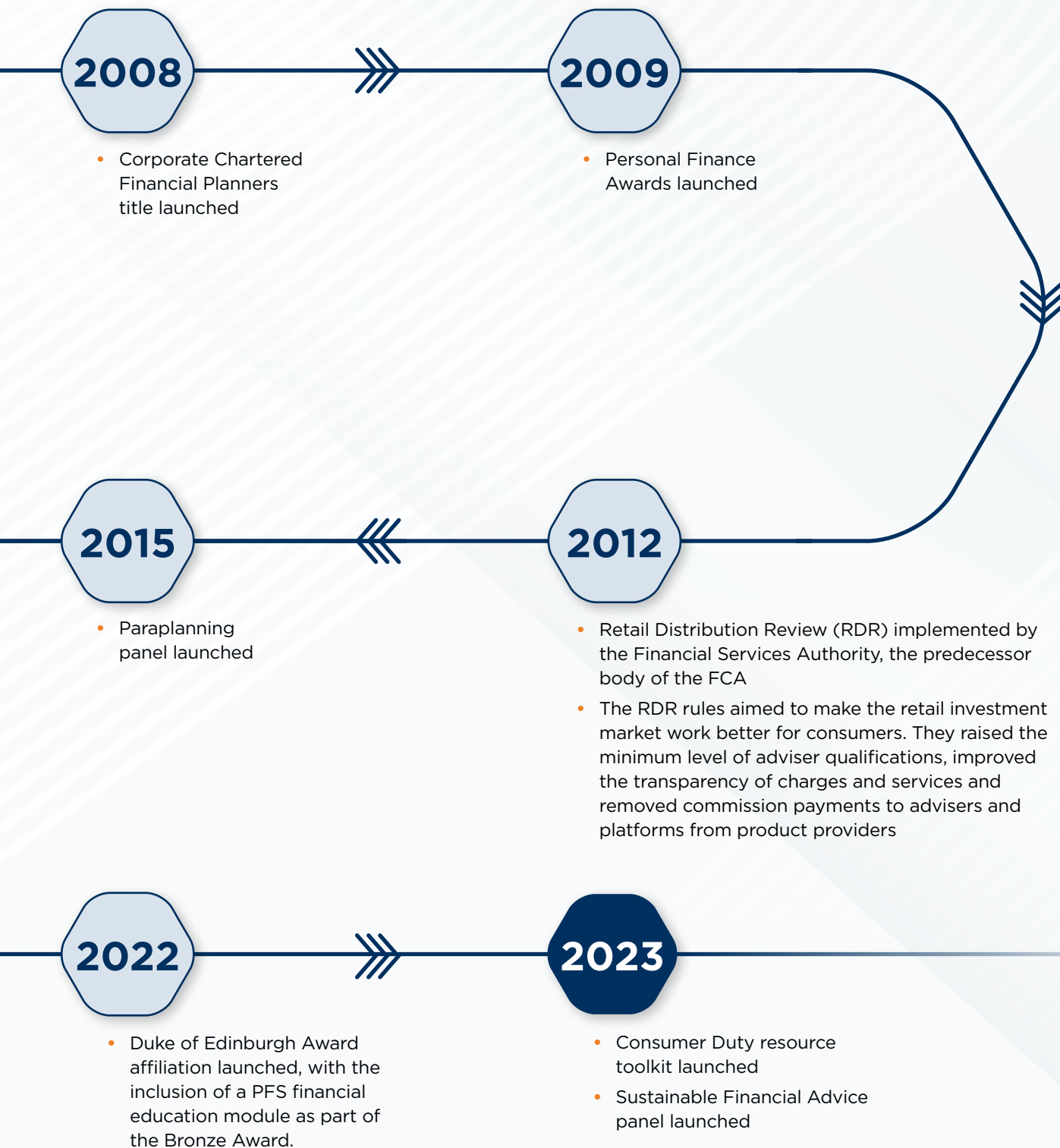
- PFS Power launched, focused on financial planning skills development

2020

- My Personal Finance Skills, our schools' education initiative, launched

2021

- Consultation of PFS members undertaken to receive feedback on the future relationship between PFS and CII



Board changes

This past year was a challenging one for the PFS and its members, and consequently, as is shown below, there were a significant number of changes in the membership of the Board both during the year and in the months since. Guided by our vision, mission and objectives we continue to build the foundations for progress and future success for the PFS and its members.

The table below shows a summary of the PFS Board changes during 2023.

PFS BOARD TENURE			
Directors (as at 1 March 2024)			
Name	Position	Appointed as Director	End of current term
Elizabeth Bastin	Lay Director	1 October 2020	18 September 2024
Anthony Ward	Member Director	15 September 2021	18 September 2024
Neil Watts	Institute Director	21 December 2022	20 December 2024
Sarah Howe	Institute Director	21 December 2022	20 December 2024
Carla Brown	Member Director	22 June 2023	2025 or 2026 AGM
Daniel Williams	Member Director	22 June 2023	2025 or 2026 AGM
Edward Grant	Institute Director	12 July 2023	28 June 2024
Catharine Seddon	Institute Director	12 July 2023	28 June 2024
Neil Buckley	Institute Director	12 July 2023	28 June 2024
Christine Elliott	Institute Director (Interim Chair)	12 July 2023	31 May 2024
Former Directors (who resigned during 2023)			
Andrew Briscoe	Institute Director	12 July 2023	Resigned on 7 December 2023
Mark Hutchinson	Institute Director (staff)	7 February 2022	Resigned on 12 July 2023
Azlina Kamarulzaman	Institute Director (staff)	21 December 2022	Resigned on 12 July 2023
Gillian White	Institute Director (staff)	7 February 2022	Resigned on 12 July 2023
Vanessa Barnes	Member Director	17 September 2018	Resigned on 21 June 2023
Gordon Wilson	Member Director	18 September 2017	Resigned on 21 June 2023
Caroline Stuart	Member Director	17 September 2018	Resigned on 5 January 2023



Notes:

1. The Board comprises up to eight Member Directors, up to two Lay Directors, and such Institute Directors as the Institute sees fit.
2. The aggregate total of Member Directors and Lay Directors shall not exceed eight.
3. The maximum term of office of a Member Director and a Lay Director of the Society is six years and all Member Directors and Lay Directors shall be deemed to have retired on the sixth anniversary of their appointment as a Member Director or a Lay Director.
4. The following changes took place after the end of the period:
 - a. 29 February 2024 — Ben Wright was appointed as a new Director on an initial four-year term; and Carla Brown and Daniel Williams, both existing Directors, were elected as Vice Presidents
 - b. 31 May 2024 — Piers White MBE was appointed the first independent Chair of the PFS on an initial three-year term; and Debbie Mitchell DipPFS and Mike Crane ACII were appointed as Directors on one-year terms

Update from our chair and interim CEO

I am pleased to introduce the PFS Annual Report 2023 — a year of transition. The focus on PFS governance in 2023 enabled us to both strengthen our governance processes and begin to bring them up to date. During the year, we were also active on Member Director recruitment and assembled a full complement of Member Directors, plus a Board with an increased diversity in the way it thinks and acts.

This document complements the detailed statement covering the organisation's financial performance in the year contained in the accompanying PFS Report and Financial Statements 2023.

thevfs.org/financial-statements

Governance is comprised of two parts — the hardware and the software. The hardware is the necessary documentation and the golden thread that runs through decision making at Board level. The software is the relationships that are in place within that Board and between that Board and its parent company. Our focus is to operate both in the interests of our members and those of the CII Group and I believe these are now better aligned as a result of the changes that have been made.

During my time as Interim Chair, my colleagues and I ensured a relentless focus on the interests of our members, and at every Board meeting we covered our actions for members since the last period. These included a reconfigured events programme which has been attracting record numbers, and the work that we've been doing on the Consumer Duty resource toolkit for members.

The Board and I commend the commitment, energy and expertise of Don MacIntyre, our Interim Chief Executive Officer, and also the colleagues from the CII with whom he has successfully worked to deliver for our members, including events such as the superb graduation ceremony in November 2023.

Overall, the PFS continues to be a financially resilient organisation dedicated to working in its members' interests and managing its money well, in exactly the same way that our members do for their clients.

Christine Elliott
Interim Chair





Don MacIntyre, Interim CEO, reflects on the successes of 2023 and shares plans for 2024 and beyond.

The ever-evolving global landscape continued to reshape the financial services sector in 2023, with shifting regulatory frameworks and economic uncertainties testing the resilience of personal finance professionals. Change has been the defining theme for the PFS at an organisational level too.

The changes within the PFS Board demanded unwavering patience, focus and unity. Our new Board wholeheartedly shares a singular vision for the future and brings a diversity of backgrounds and expertise that will play a pivotal role in driving positive change.

Our commitment to reinvigorating our focus on our membership remains unstinting. The steps towards this goal we have taken in 2023 fall broadly into two categories: supporting our members with navigating regulatory changes in tangible ways; and the development of an event offering that is more relevant to our members' needs.

Consumer Duty: We have designed a toolkit to help our members manage the change necessary to comply with the FCA's Consumer Duty requirements. Firstly, by identifying, understanding, and bringing a more intuitive language to the Duty itself and those areas that directly apply to the advice profession; and secondly, through the development of Proficiency+, a product that allows members to self-evaluate, identifying training where it's most needed and provide evidence of compliance to the FCA. Our Consumer Duty Toolkit has been downloaded more than 6,400 times.

Member-centric event offering: We have worked hard to understand what our members want and used their insights to redesign and improve our portfolio of events. The result is events at five locations across the UK on a series of topics including budget, AI, technology and sustainability. The events were made available in a multi-stream format offering a choice of content for everyone across the financial planning community — from advisers and paraplanners to compliance specialists and those in back-office roles. These “technical masterclasses” were balanced with skills development, career pathway workshops and interactive good practice development sessions. We had 3,000 registrations for the first series of these events, with an average speaker rating of 4.6 out of 5, and 98% of attendees confirming that they would attend similar events in the future.

We remained steadfast in our commitment to improving operations and hosting regional events. We witnessed the return of the PFS Officers' Conference, the prestigious Personal Finance Awards — hosted by TV and radio personality, Claudia Winkleman — and we concluded the year with a highly successful Annual Conference in Newport, Wales.

Update from our chair and interim CEO

continued

Our priority themes for 2024

Our priorities for 2024 are in line with the outputs of the strategic review we published in 2023.

Thought leadership: In 2024, thought leadership takes centre stage. We aim to elevate the voice of our members with initiatives and platforms that enable members to share their expertise and influence the financial services sector positively.

Stronger representation with the FCA: Building a stronger relationship with the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) continues to be a top priority. Our efforts will focus on promoting a constructive dialogue that benefits both our members and the regulatory landscape.

Finance services professional body partnerships: Strengthening partnerships with other professional bodies within the profession is hugely important. Collaborations will allow us to create a more comprehensive and interconnected support network for our members, advancing the profession and better serving their evolving needs and potential changes ahead.

Profession development: We will support the growth of our profession by actively engaging with educational institutions, attracting new talent and promoting the value of financial planning as a rewarding career path.

Value of advice: We are committed to growing the profession and improving its standing with consumers. We will deliver initiatives aimed at raising public awareness and understanding of the value that financial planning professionals bring to individuals and families.

Regional events: We will enhance our regional events, creating more CPD opportunities and combining the need for strong technical content with a focus on the development of soft skills, which are so critical to client relationships and, ultimately, business growth.



CPD development and infrastructure investment: CPD remains a cornerstone of our offer. Investment in infrastructure and technology will deliver a seamless CPD experience, making it easier for members to stay at the forefront of their profession. In addition to technical expertise, we recognise the growing importance of soft skills in the financial planning profession. We will expand our CPD offer to include soft skills development, ensuring members have the interpersonal and communication skills necessary to excel in their role and provide exceptional service to clients.

Member benefits: Membership is not just about receiving support, but also enjoying an array of benefits that add value. In the coming year, we will introduce several member-centric initiatives designed to enrich professional journeys.

I would like wholeheartedly to thank all our volunteers in the network of PFS regions for all their help during the year. Each region is run by a dedicated group of members who are essential to maintaining the future growth and professional standing of the Society. Each region will typically provide a programme of CPD seminars, social and business networking events, guidance on exam techniques, volunteering opportunities and much more. Without their tireless support, the PFS simply would not be able to operate.

All our members uphold the status of the PFS as the pre-eminent membership body through their dedication to the highest standards and it is our privilege to represent and serve the very best of the profession.

I am proud to say that the journey of change and transformation that we went on in 2023 has left us well-placed to deliver all the elements that our members require in the years to come, and thereby to build public trust.

Don MacIntyre,
Interim CEO

“ ”

The PFS continues to be a financially resilient organisation dedicated to working in its members' interests

Learning

Our suite of qualifications caters for all levels of knowledge and experience, from new entrants through to seasoned professionals. The flexible structure of our qualifications allows members to create an individual learning programme that suits their needs. Designed with market experts, we offer a range of relevant learning solutions to support development across the different sectors of the personal finance market.

Our qualifications are designed and operated in consultation with experienced sector practitioners with the CII as the awarding body, and most are registered with Ofqual¹ in the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF). Many are recognised by the FCA as appropriate qualifications to undertake specific regulated roles and activities.

Most of our qualifications have core units, providing essential foundations to build on, or to provide close alignment with the FCA's mandatory content requirements. In addition, for some qualifications, members can choose from the optional units available for their qualification to gain the total credits needed for completion. Units vary in difficulty and are assessed by either multiple-choice question exam, written exam, or coursework assignments.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is activity undertaken to ensure members' competencies are up-to-date. Our CPD provides a practical framework for ensuring development is addressed in a structured way to meet members' personal needs, those of their employer and ultimately the needs of consumers, aligned with the regulatory framework and professional standards of the CII, as a Chartered professional body.

CPD is a common requirement for qualified members of professional bodies. It reflects the fact that, in today's fast changing world, knowledge gained through qualifications quickly dates and, if you are to remain competent, you must continue to develop and enhance both your technical knowledge and wider behaviours and skills enablers to ensure you can effectively apply your practical knowledge to the specific needs of each client.

Most of the CPD support offered is delivered by our volunteer network across 26 PFS regions. Each region is run by a dedicated group of member volunteers who are essential in maintaining the future growth and professional standing of the Society.

Each region will typically provide a programme of CPD seminars, social and business networking events, guidance on exam techniques and volunteering opportunities.

The PFS uses the **Professional Map** as the competency framework for all personal finance professions, providing a structure and prioritisation for the full range of technical knowledge, behaviours and enabling skills required to perform as a holistic professional. Members are encouraged also to use this to assess their own competency strengths and weaknesses and to use the bespoke 'find learning' function to locate relevant CPD to fill any gaps.





Consumer Duty Hub:

In 2023, we developed an online hub to help our members comply with the introduction of Consumer Duty rules.

The FCA published its Consumer Duty rules in July 2022, for implementation in two stages, in July 2023 and July 2024.

At the highest level, the Duty can be summed up in a new principle: “A firm must act to deliver good outcomes for retail customers.”

As such, Consumer Duty regulations provide an opportunity for firms to demonstrate their commitment to their clients and boost confidence in financial services.

The FCA’s principle is elaborated in cross-cutting rules, or obligations, which state that a firm must:

- act in good faith towards retail customers
- avoid foreseeable harm to retail customers
- enable and support retail customers to pursue their financial objectives

These cross-cutting rules are linked to four outcomes:

- Products and services
- Price and value
- Consumer understanding
- Consumer support

In response to this, we produced a **toolkit**, designed in association with compliance experts who have worked with financial services firms, to help our members not just prepare for the introduction of Consumer Duty, but embed the cultural changes post implementation to deliver sustainable benefits to clients beyond mere compliance.

In tandem, we developed the **Proficiency+** Consumer Duty diagnostic tool to enable firms to manage, develop and evidence the behaviours and competence against the expectations of the FCA.

Sector thought leadership

As part of the CII, our aim is to become a much bolder voice for the public and for our members and increase our advocacy activities accordingly. We aim to play a greater direct role in influencing relevant legislation and policy decisions by government, while continuing to collaborate with others within our sectors to effect change. We will work to build the PFS' broad brand recognition within our sectors and beyond and become a commentator of choice on professional matters in financial planning and mortgage advice.

Our objective is to be known as the thought leader for our sectors, drawing on the expertise of our members to develop cutting-edge knowledge on professional matters and partnering with innovators to showcase the future for financial planning.



Our focus will be on continuing to help members navigate the introduction of new regulations, such as the Financial Conduct Authority's Consumer Duty regulations.

During 2023 we produced and disseminated relevant Good Practice and Companion Guides to our Code of Ethics. This included a guide on environmental and social governance, sometimes known as Green Finance, and a piece on AI around safeguards, governance processes, how you treat third parties, and levels of scrutiny.

In September, we established a new panel of advisers, policy professionals and sustainable finance experts to enhance advice standards and consumer outcomes around climate change and other sustainability challenges.

The PFS Sustainable Financial Advice Panel will help PFS members to embed sustainability into the advice they provide to consumers and ensure that the profession is at the heart of policy development in this space. The new panel will set standards for advisers as well as providing PFS members with the support, guidance and training that will enable them to give consumers consistent, high-quality advice on sustainable finance and related areas.

Our "My Personal Finance Skills" schools education programme returned to the classroom having been delivered virtually during the pandemic. During the academic year 2022-23, we delivered essential financial skills to more than 26,000 students, thanks to the support of our expert volunteers delivering more than 600 sessions. In addition, we developed and began piloting a dedicated 12-week programme as part of the popular Duke of Edinburgh skills development scheme supported by funding from the Education and Training Trust.

In 2024, the PFS and CII have been working with insurance and financial planning firms as part of a scheme to pilot new T Level qualifications in Finance and Insurance. T Levels are 2-year, Level 3, qualifications available to 16 to 19-year-olds in England. The qualifications have been designed in collaboration with employers and are equivalent in size to three A levels. They have been developed to help young people acquire the skills, knowledge and behaviours needed to progress into skilled employment, an apprenticeship, or further study.

These PFS and CII pilot schemes will allow us to work closely with employers and educators, providing the support needed to build a successful pathway for new talent.

Member engagement

One of the most valuable benefits of membership of the PFS is the support and guidance offered by fellow members. Whether through conferences, study groups or participation in technical case studies they are a chance for members to improve their understanding of key technical subjects and develop their financial planning skills, as well as learning about new ideas that they can apply in their role.

The PFS has 26 regional committees, run by enthusiastic member volunteers. Attending PFS Local events is a great way to stay up to date, network with fellow professionals and learn something new. What's more, attendance at such events can count towards a member's CPD.

In addition to this regional support, we ran three national events during 2023.

The PFS held its 15th annual Personal Finance Awards ceremony in October, celebrating the individuals and firms who deliver exceptional consumer outcomes within the financial planning profession.

Hosted by Claudia Winkleman, the occasion shone a spotlight on those who excel within their work as an opportunity for the sector to recognise the remarkable achievements of the previous year.

In November, the PFS celebrated the graduation of 57 Fellows and 58 Chartered members in two ceremonies at Westminster Chapel.

PFS Chartered status is recognised by peers and those seeking advice as a symbol of technical competence and public commitment to professional standards. Independent research confirms that those seeking advice are more likely to choose an individual or firm that is Chartered.

Becoming a Fellow of the PFS is the most prestigious level of professional achievement. PFS members must have completed the Level 6 Advanced Diploma in Financial Planning and acquired a total of 350 credits, which can be achieved via additional Chartered Insurance Institute units, or recognition of prior learning for non-CII (regulated) qualifications.

The PFS held its annual national conference in Newport, Wales in October, where members were invited to explore how their ethical duty to clients can evolve, as part of a greater focus on contributing positively to our environment and wider society.

Keynote speakers included Matt Watkinson, consultant and expert on customer experience, and Catherine Morgan, a multi-award-winning qualified financial planner whose mission is to reduce financial anxiety and increase financial empowerment and resilience.

Members in attendance received more than four hours of CPD, covering financial planning skills, leadership, business ethics, wealth management, sustainability, diversity and inclusion, as well as technology.





President's statement



Anthony Ward, Head of Virtual Wealth Management at Barclays Private Bank and Wealth Management, was appointed President of the PFS in March 2023.

In this statement he reflects on his involvement with the PFS; the focus of his presidency; the importance of professional qualifications; the need to attract new and diverse talent to the profession; and the future of personal finance.

Career:

I fell in love with financial planning when I was 21 doing a work placement at a firm of IFAs. When the owner gave me the opportunity to sit in on a client meeting and I saw with my own eyes the impact the IFA had on the client's future and the peace of mind and clarity they obtained from the meeting, I was hooked on helping clients achieve their goals through financial planning and I still am.

Having worked as an IFA in several banks and accountancy firms, I joined Barclays Wealth 12 years ago and over this time I've held a number of leadership roles including Head of Wealth Planning UK. I now have a scale leadership role leading a large Virtual Wealth Management business.

The PFS and my career:

I first joined the PFS in 2004 when I started studying for the Certificate in Financial Planning as part of my dream to become an IFA. After completing the Certificate, I moved swiftly onto the Diploma and Advanced Diplomas, achieving Chartered Status. Throughout this time, I won local prizes for my exam results whilst benefiting greatly from the support of local PFS and CII Committee Members. These fellow members inspired me to get involved more in the profession and therefore in 2011 I contacted the CII to ask if they needed any face-to-face tutors to support with the implementation of the Retail Distribution Review and the considerable work involved in the profession increasing the minimum qualification from level 3 to level 4. They agreed and my career as a trainer began (in addition to my day job as an IFA). Over the years I got involved in helping to launch new qualifications and I joined the CII Education and Learning Committee where I served for 6 years before successfully becoming a Member of the PFS Board in September 2021.

Presidential focus:

The theme of my Presidency is 'The Future'. I feel that now is the perfect time for PFS members and Board to ask ourselves what they want the future of our profession to look like. Personally, when I look to the future, I see it through 3 lenses:

- **The future for our clients:** Through our work at the PFS we must raise professional standards, and encourage the personal finance profession to be ever more client-centric.
- **The future for our members:** We must continue to provide value to members and attract new and diverse talent into the industry, so we have a profession that thrives and represents all the communities we serve.
- **The future relationship with the CII Group:** We must work with the CII to achieve our goals and be a force for good partnering on key strategic priorities.

Professional qualifications:

Qualifications are the bedrock of professionalism. They encourage members to learn about and strive for excellence and, in turn, enable quality advice to be delivered. For clients and for the public they are a true sign that the professional they are dealing with has the knowledge required to support them with their financial planning needs.

New and diverse talent:

Diversity, equity and inclusion is a topic that I'm passionate about and I know many members care deeply as well. I have three young daughters and when I first became a dad 12 years ago I started to see clearly for the first time in my life how underlying prejudice and bias exist. I've come on a personal journey to realise the huge privileges I have as a white middle-aged man. I've become more curious about others and benefited from reverse mentoring from colleagues who are different from me. Through this I have learned a lot about Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and in turn this education has helped me become an active ally. I really believe in privilege and allyship and putting this to good use to help others.

As a profession we have more to do to educate on diversity, equity and inclusion and the benefits of each. We all have an opportunity to develop our profession to be more diverse and inclusive.

Developing diverse talent into the profession is arguably the most important work we can do now and if we take the right actions over the next few years we can work towards a thriving profession full of diverse talent that fully represents the communities we serve.

Trends in personal finance:

Digital transformation, the growing demand for advice in the 'affluent' segment of the market and competition from new entrants to the market will be key areas over the next 5 years. The pace of change over the next 10 years will be immense and the PFS as the leading professional body for financial services has a valuable role helping members prepare for change and supporting leaders with delivering the change.

As the PFS, we have a huge opportunity to make a positive impact across the UK, the future of our profession is very bright and with highly engaged members I'm sure we will harness all the knowledge, skills and experience we have to grow together.

Our Board

The Board is our governing body and its role is to promote the long-term sustainable success of the PFS in the furtherance of its objects. It achieves this by driving strategy, ensuring we have the resources, culture and controls in place to meet our strategic objectives, and promoting effective engagement with our members and wider stakeholders.



To learn more about our Board members visit:
www.thepfs.org/about-us/governance/meet-the-board/





1. **Anthony Ward BSc, FPFS, Cert CII (MP)**
Chartered Financial Planner
2. **Carla Brown MSc, FPFS**
Chartered Financial Planner
3. **Daniel Williams DipPFS**
Director
4. **Ben Wright MSc, FPFS**
Chartered Financial Planner
5. **Catharine Seddon**
Director
6. **Christine Elliott**
Director
7. **Edward Grant**
Director
8. **Neil Buckley**
Director
9. **Neil Watts**
Director
10. **Sarah Howe**
Director
11. **Elizabeth Bastin**
Director



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