

IndustryVoice

Analysis, commentary and trends for the UK mortgage, protection & retirement industry | Edition 24 Winter 2025

Thriving in the new age of Protection

Articles from

Iress

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Welcome

Welcome to this years final edition of the Industry Voice, and what a year it has been!

This final edition of Industry Voice explores the real-world ecosystem of support that surrounds today's protection adviser, from learning resources and sales content to platform tools and peer networks. We asked a vital question:

What do advisers need to not just survive, but truly succeed – and how well is the industry responding?

Whether it's cutting through complexity, harnessing smarter tech, navigating regulation, or simply feeling more confident in client conversations, support takes many forms. Our goal this issue is to help you see what's available, what's working, and how to make it work for you.

We are always keen to hear your thoughts about this issue and the topics raised.

If you would like to get in touch, please contact the Advertising & Sponsorship Team, advertising@iress.com

Visit: iress.com/industry-voice for more perspectives from our provider & lender partners about the issues affecting our industry.

IndustryVoice

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Stop selling, start safeguarding



Matt Chapman
The Protection Coach

In a world defined by constant change, advisers are facing more complexity than ever before including regulatory changes, shifts in client expectations, and the rapid advance of technology. But the biggest opportunity for progress isn't in any single one of those things. It's in how we use all three together to elevate the way we deliver impactful advice.

For too long, protection has been treated as something that sits alongside other areas of financial advice. A "nice-to-have" option once the real business of mortgages, pensions, or investments has been taken care of, assuming there's some budget left over and some intent on the part of the client. But that mindset belongs to the past.

Protection isn't an add-on; it's the foundation. It's the bedrock that allows every other piece of financial advice to work and to keep working, even when life doesn't go to plan.

From selling products to safeguarding goals

No customer ever seeks advice for a product. They come to us because they have a goal. Often, a deeply personal one. Buying a home. Retiring early. Building wealth.

Creating security for their family. Our job as advisers is to unearth and understand those goals clearly. Given the lack of financial education available in the UK, these goals can often be hidden, masked or unclear. But once established, it becomes very easy to assess how vulnerable they are and what could easily stop them from being achieved. From there, it's both easy and professionally responsible to put plans in place to make sure they remain achievable, no matter what happens next.

That's where protection belongs: not as a product recommendation, but as the strategic safeguard that allows those goals to survive the unexpected and for the other areas of advice you or your colleagues are giving the client to remain fully executable.

Clarity through complexity

Technology is helping us do this better than ever before. Tools like affordability calculators, budget planners and cashflow models don't just help clients see what's possible when things go well - they can just as powerfully show the impact when things don't.

Remove an income line from a cashflow forecast and the picture changes instantly. The client doesn't just lose the ability to contribute to their pension or pay their mortgage, they lose the ability to achieve their goal, the compounding growth of their funds, and the loss of the life they were planning for.

This is where the conversation shifts from "if" to "when." Because life will happen. And when advisers use technology to model those risks



visually and emotionally, protection stops feeling like a sale, it becomes an obvious, logical investment in their own resilience. It starts to feel like an invaluable investment in their own goals.

Compliance, clarity and consumer Duty

Regulation, too, plays a critical role. Consumer Duty isn't just about compliance; it's about demonstrating how your advice genuinely helps clients achieve their financial objectives. When we use technology to evidence how a plan supports those outcomes, and what would happen without protection in place. We're not just being compliant, we're being compelling.

Managing client expectations early is key. The worst time to talk

about protection is at the end of a conversation when the client thinks the main advice is done. That's when it feels like a sales pitch. But when we set expectations from the outset - "Part of my role is to make sure your goals remain achievable, even when things go wrong for you" - clients lean in, not away.

Meeting the new client expectation

Today's clients expect transparency, personalisation, and value. They don't want jargon. They want clarity. They want to feel understood.

When advisers use digital tools, calculators, and scenario modelling to bring advice to life, it helps clients connect emotionally with the abstract numbers, and that's where true understanding, and action, happens.

Technology can never replace the human element, but it can enhance it. It can help advisers have more confident, more visual, and more client-centred conversations.

That's what thriving looks like in the new age of protection: blending data with empathy, automation with authenticity, and compliance with compassion.

Because at the heart of it all, protection isn't about products or premiums. It's about goals, resilience, and the promise that when life happens - and it will - your client's plans don't have to fall apart.

Let's stop selling protection. Let's start safeguarding futures.

The Adviser's co-pilot: Understanding AI in a changing world



Jane Irwin
Product Lead - Protection
iress



We are in an exciting new era of technological advancement. With AI evolving at pace, we explore how the right digital tools can act as a true co-pilot and why the industry must avoid the trap of building an autopilot.

Technology. Regulation. Client Expectation. For years, these have been the forces shaping our industry. Today, however, we stand at the threshold of a genuinely exciting time. With the unprecedented speed of advancements in Artificial Intelligence (AI), the potential to further enhance the co-pilot opportunities for advisers has never been greater.

This new power brings with it a profound responsibility. Technology should always serve people, not replace them. We believe we cannot be on "autopilot" when it comes to how we develop and use AI.

The goal is not technology for technology's sake, but to thoughtfully integrate tools that serve the ultimate purpose: delivering better outcomes for clients.

Embracing this future requires a balanced perspective. Generalist

AI tools are impressive and widely used, but they are a perfect example of the "autopilot" risk. They can get things wrong, lack the nuanced understanding of financial products and compliance, and contain inherent bias. This is why the real opportunity lies in developing specialist generative AI tools, ones that are specifically trained to be safe and effective co-pilots for our industry.

At iress, we see AI not as a replacement for advisers, but as an enabler. We think of it as a

co-pilot; augmenting the adviser's expertise rather than supplanting it. The adviser remains firmly at the centre of the client relationship, with AI supporting them to deliver faster, more personalised, and more compliant outcomes.

To get this right, we must master today's challenges first. Modern sourcing platforms already act as a brilliant co-pilot, sifting through policy details to provide a clear, evidence-based view of the market. This turns a compliance burden into an opportunity to show value.



This is the critical difference. An autopilot takes over. A co-pilot handles the heavy lifting of research and data analysis, freeing you to do what technology cannot: listen with empathy, understand nuanced needs, and build trust. The co-pilot provides the "what," so you can focus on the "why."

Developing safe, compliant, and trustworthy AI will require deep collaboration between technology providers, lenders, distributors, and advisers. But when we get it right, AI can truly become a co-pilot that enhances financial advice, not a substitute for it.

We cannot be on autopilot, but if we collaborate, we can ensure AI becomes a true co-pilot that enhances advice, not a substitute for it.

As the following pages will explore, this emerging technology is just one part of the adviser's support ecosystem. Welcome to your guide for building a future-proof protection practice.

“The goal is not technology for technology's sake, but to thoughtfully integrate tools that serve the ultimate purpose: delivering better outcomes for clients.”

Protecting legacy: Advisers as mediators



Dr. Eliza Filby
Historian, Author, and Public speaker
Aviva



Dr. Eliza Filby is a leading voice on generational change, wealth, and family dynamics. As a historian and author, she brings a unique lens to the evolving story of money, not just how it's earned, but how it's shared, gifted, and inherited across generations. In our Aviva "Wealth Across the Ages" webinar series Dr. Filby explores the shifting landscape of financial planning through the lens of generational behaviour. Discover how women's growing financial influence is impacting on intergenerational planning and how advisers can support conversations.

"In my research, I've spoken heavily with Financial Advisers and sometimes anonymously because they talk to me very openly about the challenges within their industry. I've also had brutally honest conversations about my own struggles, support network and lived experience of the Bank of Mum and Dad and the complications of that when my mum came to live with me, because it's not just about the wealth transferring.

One of the most poignant moments in my research came from speaking to a financial adviser who told me they weren't informed of a client's death until three weeks after it had happened. By then, the will had been

wrapped up, and the opportunity to support the family had passed.

This is not an isolated story. I've spoken to Baby Boomer widows who admitted, quite openly, that they had never paid a bill in their lives. Their husbands had taken care of everything. And when those husbands passed away, the financial powerhouses of the family, the surviving spouse was left vulnerable, overwhelmed, and often excluded from the very advice that could have helped.

Families are complicated

We are living through the largest transfer of wealth in human history.

But this isn't just about numbers, it's about people. Families are emotionally complex, and wealth transfer is rarely straightforward.

When the person who managed the finances dies, the ripple effects are felt deeply. Children step up, often daughters, navigating not just grief but financial responsibility. And advisers, if not already embedded in the family's planning, can find themselves sidelined.

The vulnerability of dependents, especially women, is a recurring theme. Many baby boomer women were financially dependent on their husbands. When those husbands die, the financial knowledge and



control often die with them. That's not just a personal crisis, it's a systemic one.

The Adviser's role: A neutral mediator

I've described financial advisers as neutral mediators. You are not emotionally entangled in the family dynamics, but you are uniquely positioned to guide, educate, and support. Your role is not just about managing money, it's about facilitating conversations that families often avoid until it's too late.

And let's be honest: we're not good at talking about inheritance. The

more money involved, the less likely people are to discuss it. That silence breeds confusion, resentment, and sometimes legal disputes. I've seen families fragment after the death of a parent, siblings fighting over perceived unfairness, and advisers left out of the loop.

Planning while people are still alive

If you want to protect your client relationships and truly support families through the great wealth transfer, you must be involved before the loss occurs. That means encouraging open dialogue, understanding the emotional landscape, and helping clients

prepare, not just financially, but relationally. Because when the financial powerhouse is lost, it's not just about replacing income. It's about preserving stability, dignity, and legacy."

To explore more generational insights for your protection conversations, watch the webinar trilogy series "Wealth Through The Ages" available on demand. Hear directly from Dr Eliza Filby and discover practical strategies to support your clients across generations.



"As the protection market evolves, clarity is becoming one of the most valuable things providers can offer. Advisers are navigating regulatory change and growing client expectations, all while trying to deliver efficient and compliant advice that speaks to clients.

When it comes to innovation, in a way, the real opportunity lies in simply removing friction. This would mean thoughtfully using the digital tools now available to create straightforward products and resources that make protection easier to understand and deliver to those who need it.

However, simplicity isn't about doing less. It's about doing things better. Technology can help providers achieve that by streamlining processes and cutting through unnecessary complexity."

Phil Nash, Chief Sales Officer, Shepherds Friendly



Shepherds Friendly
The UK's



"Advisers are navigating more complexity than ever, from regulation to rapidly changing client needs. It's brilliant to see how the entire protection industry is stepping up with such an incredible range of support. We're seeing fantastic collaboration, from valuable peer-to-peer learning networks to powerful new sales tools and insightful content.

This whole ecosystem is thriving, and that gives advisers the confidence to have better conversations. Our commitment at Iress is to use our technology to connect advisers seamlessly to this support, making it effortless to access the best tools, calculators, and educational content directly within their daily platforms."

Jacqueline Durbin, Global Head of Product - Life, Pensions & Mortgages , Iress



iress



"Tools action conversations with clients. In recent years, these tools have been complemented by a breadth of additional resources; from webinars and podcasts to social media campaigns, in-depth product research, and awareness weeks.

"But it's not only the way resources and information are made available to advisers that has evolved; the content itself has also transformed. Support for advisers now extends well beyond product training and objection-handling techniques. Today, advisers have access to resources covering everything from vulnerable customers and underserved markets to DE&I and behavioural economics.

"These resources, combined with the expert support provided by Business Development Managers, not only enables advisers to meet the needs of today's clients, but also the clients of tomorrow."

Jamie Page, Head of Distribution, The Exeter



The Exeter
Health & Life Insurance



Bringing Protection to life



Gifford Clay
Head of Intermediary Sales
National Friendly



In a fast-moving protection landscape, advisers are being challenged to have more meaningful, data-driven conversations with clients. From economic pressures to changes in how people work, live and prioritise their wellbeing, it's never been more important to connect advice to real life.

At National Friendly, we believe the key to bridging that gap lies in education, giving advisers the confidence, evidence, and resources they need to make protection tangible and relevant for every client.

Turning insights into action

Our approach begins with research. Through our [Bruised Britain](#) study, we've uncovered how financial resilience, and societal trends are evolving. This crucial insight gives advisers a fresh perspective, not just on the "why", but on the real people they're protecting.

By combining research insight with adviser feedback, the industry can proactively identify emerging needs early and adapt accordingly. The

result is a suite of non-traditional protection solutions to complement the more traditional offering, such as short-term, non-traditional and modular cover options, that better reflect today's consumer needs, from gig-economy workers to families juggling multiple priorities.

Training that goes beyond the product

But insight alone isn't enough. Advisers tell us that what truly makes the difference is confidence in the conversation, knowing how to handle objections, navigate sensitive topics, and demonstrate value when consumers are under financial pressure.

That's why online training sessions, regional workshops and webinars

are vital to help advisers build the soft skills that power client conversations. Whether it's tackling cost concerns, framing short-term cover as an entry stepping stone, or identifying when a non-underwritten option best suits a client, our aim is to provide practical content that turns knowledge into confident advice.

Real stories, real impact

We also know that [real life examples](#) can achieve what statistics can't. Our case studies and testimonials bring to life the genuine impact protection has.

When advisers share these real-world examples, they're not just selling a policy; they're illustrating a promise. They remind clients

that protection isn't about what might go wrong, it's about ensuring they're not left alone if it does.

Making Protection tangible

Across the industry, we face a shared challenge: how to make protection feel real for clients. Facts and figures matter, but what truly resonates are stories, empathy, and relevance. The more we can link protection to lived experience, from missed workdays to caring responsibilities or shifting income patterns, the more tangible and relatable it becomes.

Happily, the old fashioned disturbance techniques that were often favoured in the past to frighten clients into action have

been abandoned. That said, it's important that as an industry we can still raise awareness of the very real risks clients face every day. For example, our research shows that nearly 25% of under 35s who experienced a recent accident, now live with a resulting disability or long-term health condition.

Evolving with the industry, together

The protection landscape is evolving rapidly, shaped by changing work patterns, growing financial pressures, and increasing consumer awareness of wellbeing. Success now depends on how well we, as an industry, adapt and collaborate to meet those changes.

That means moving beyond

products to focus on purpose, helping people build resilience, understand their risks, and feel supported through life's uncertainties. Data, technology, and behavioural insight will all play a role, but so will empathy and education.

By sharing insights, experiences, and ideas across the advice community, we can continue to evolve protection into something that feels indispensable, not as a policy on paper, but as a cornerstone of modern financial planning.

[Find out more](#) about our approach to non-traditional protection products on our website today.



Feed your passion: Making Protection advice personal again



Justin Hay
Senior RP Intermediary Marketing Manager
L&G



In a world of fast-evolving tech, regulation, and client expectations, protection advice can feel like a balancing act. Advisers are expected to be product experts, compliance champions, and empathetic listeners — all while navigating increasingly complex client needs.

But amid the noise, one thing remains constant: the power of human connection.

At Legal & General, we believe protection advice is at its best when it's personal. That means moving beyond features and benefits — and into the real-life impact these products have on people's lives. It's about helping advisers reconnect with the "why" behind the advice, and reigniting the passion that brought them into the profession.

As Georgia Perkins, one of our market development managers, puts it:

"We never stop being passionate about what we do. We can very easily get stuck into the day-to-day jobs that we have to complete, and the passion can fall away."

Real Stories, Real Impact

Protection isn't just a policy — it's a lifeline. And sometimes, the most powerful way to demonstrate value is through storytelling.

On our Adviser Site, we've curated a series of real-life case studies that show how protection products have supported clients through bereavement, illness, and financial uncertainty. These stories aren't just compelling — they're practical tools for advisers to use in client conversations.

Whether it's a critical illness payout that helped a family stay afloat, or income protection that gave someone breathing room

during recovery, these examples bring clarity to complexity. They help clients see the relevance of protection in their own lives — not just as a financial product, but as a source of stability and care.

Support That Educates and Elevates

We know advisers need more than just product specs. That's why our Adviser Academy focuses on holistic development — offering CPD-accredited webinars, soft skills training, and peer-led insights that help advisers grow their confidence and capability.

From objection handling to behavioural psychology, we're



helping advisers build the skills that matter most in the evolving advice market. Because understanding the emotional drivers behind client decisions is just as important as knowing the technical details.

And when advisers feel supported, they're better equipped to support their clients.

Making Protection Tangible

Tools like calculators and planning aids are essential — but they're most effective when paired with context. That's why we're investing in stories that bring advice to life that helps advisers explain not just what a

product does, but why it matters. Whether it's through videos, podcasts, or live sessions, we're creating multi-channel content that advisers can access on their terms — helping them stay informed, inspired, and ready for any conversation.

Strength Through Community

Protection advice can be emotionally complex. That's why community matters more than ever.

We're seeing advisers lean into peer networks, shared learning, and open conversations — not just for technical support, but for

emotional resilience. The ability to share experiences, ask questions, and learn from others is becoming a non-negotiable part of staying current and confident.

As Georgia reminds us:

"Continuously feed your passion. Bringing yourself back round to what you want to do is going to help you tenfold in the future."

That's the heart of our message. Whether it's through stories, tools, or training, we're here to help advisers reconnect with their purpose — and deliver advice that truly makes a difference.

'I don't see the value' – how to tackle present bias



Justin Garbutt
Director of IFA Distribution
Vitality



It's understandable some clients fail to see the value in protection insurance given its intangible nature – peace of mind alone isn't always compelling enough. By offering more immediate upfront value, we can change the narrative on protection writes Justin Garbutt, Vitality's Director of IFA Distribution.

As advisers, you'll be all too familiar with people's preference for immediate gratification over long-term gain.

Whether it's failing to make adequate financial plans for retirement, seeking quicker (and potentially risky) investment returns or foregoing the immediate expense of insurance against some future, unforeseen risk, people are prone to making decisions that negatively impact us in the long-term.

Present bias, a term found in behavioural economics and sometimes referred to as hyperbolic discounting, tells us that people tend to – often irrationally – place more value on something that's achieved in the immediate moment, over something that has the potential for a greater payoff in

future.

Present bias and protection insurance

Alongside optimism bias – a belief bad things won't happen to us – these subconscious behavioural biases can make recommending the intangible benefit of insurance a hard sell.

With traditional protection, the client is ultimately expected to purchase the promise of a payout in the event of future illness or untimely death, which may or may not happen. There is also the danger they will see it as a waste of money, because they're optimistic and think the worst won't happen.

This peace of mind is a core component of most protection

conversations, but at a time when consumers are much more cautious about how they spend their money, this alone won't always be enough.

Even if someone is convinced to take out a cover, there's still the risk that they will lapse it, particularly if their finances are tight and they don't see any immediate value in it.

Overcoming present bias

As an industry, we hear a lot about 'added value benefits' giving clients access to certain benefits they can use any time, not just at the point of claim, and therefore offering more upfront value.

To really counter a client's present bias though, we can take this approach a step further and entirely rethink how protection works.

By delivering value that's central to the whole insurance proposition, not just as an extra bolt-on, and that the client can benefit from and access immediately, we can offer them something that satisfies them in the here and now, as well as the promise of peace of mind.

Encouraging clients to engage with immediate rewards and benefits from day one helps to reinforce their awareness that the premium they're paying is giving them something tangible.

Shared value not just added value

At Vitality, we see the effectiveness of this approach play out through Optimiser, our unique feature which gives members access to Vitality's lowest premium upfront and all

of the immediate rewards and full benefits¹ of the Vitality Programme – embedding shared value into their everyday life.

Significantly, it also means they are more likely to engage with their plan. In fact, Optimised members are twice as likely to interact with their plan².

The annual plan statements and bi-annual value statement we send to members also ensure the client is regularly contacted and aware of what they're getting, giving them more reason to engage and stick with their cover over time.

With that higher engagement also comes opportunities for advisers to strengthen the client relationship and engage with them more

regularly, driving potential cross-sell and referral business, or simply ensuring the cover remains up to date.

Unsurprisingly, engaged members are also much less likely to cancel their policy. At Vitality we see that our most engaged members are 47% less likely to cancel their plan, because their monthly premium is actually giving them something tangible².

Best of all, this approach helps to frame protection conversations in a more positive way, emphasising the value of cover every day – not just at the point of claim.

¹ Minimum premiums apply

² VitalityLife Claims and Shared Value Report 2025

“In a world of regulatory shifts, product innovation, and evolving client needs and expectations, advisers face complexity like never before, but clarity isn’t just possible, it’s essential and no adviser should have to navigate this alone.



ROYAL
LONDON
Protect your business

That’s why networks of support matter, whether it’s the expertise of BDMs, [technical support](#) for the complex scenarios or tools like the [Value of Menu](#) that help shape client solutions.

Real-life [case studies behind claims](#) make protection tangible, couple this with research and insight, such as the Iress [profile of an IP customer](#), reveals gaps and opportunities for a truly outcome-focused advice.

By leveraging these resources, we simplify protection and keep it at the heart of client conversations – building practices that are future proof and client focussed. Together, we can turn complexity into clarity and ensure advisers thrive in the new age of protection.”

Setul Mehta, Take to Market Lead, Royal London



“Real stories are a powerful way to demonstrate the huge difference protection can make to individuals and families following a life-changing event. They play an important role in supporting advisers with their client conversations by showing that protection pays. Real stories help advisers reinforce their recommendations by making the conversation feel more emotional and human, as well as highlighting how protection works in practice. They can also be a powerful tool to engage existing clients and remind them why they took their cover out.

Jennie Gow is a Formula 1 broadcaster and pitlane reporter. In December 2022, she suffered an unexpected and life-changing stroke. She shared her personal story on how Income Protection supported her at a difficult time which can be used to show the true value of having Income Protection cover in place”

Mike Farrell, Protection Sales and Marketing Director, LV=



LV=
LIVERPOOL VICTORIA



Regulatory change: What's new & why it counts



Jamie Leong
Senior Consultant
Walsham Brothers



Arguably one of the most significant regulatory changes that we have seen in years is the Financial Conduct Authority's ("FCA") Consumer Duty, which came into effect in mid-2023. Consumer Duty requires firms to deliver "good outcomes" for consumers, not just suitable products. Advisers are now required to move beyond basic product recommendation and instead provide clear evidence that protection insurances deliver measurable value, are fully understood by the consumer and are subject to regular review to ensure ongoing suitability.

And so far, the statistics support a positive shift in the market:

- Guardian Financial Services reports that 40% of advisers say Consumer Duty has led them to make more protection recommendations; and that
- 81% of advisers believe Consumer Duty has seen the industry focus on quality over price; and
- According to Royal London, 37% of adviser firms having changed how they charge fees as a direct result of fair-value assessments under Consumer Duty.

These changes aren't abstract. They affect how advisers approach protection conversations with clients, how they document advice, what products get recommended, how they explain trade-offs and how they follow up post sale.

Simplifying Complexity: How Advisers Can Find Clarity

Although the FCA acknowledges that its rules can be complex, advisers are responsible for ensuring that they understand and meet Consumer Duty. As such, advisers need to simplify the complexities in two main ways:

1. Understanding the regulation and translating it to advice

Making sure they and their firm clearly understand what parts of regulation affect protection insurance: fair value; vulnerable clients; product governance; and communication transparency. And then use tools and checklists to ensure nothing is missed when producing suitability reports quotes or product comparisons.

2. Demonstrating outcomes and value, not just price.

It isn't enough to assert that a policy is "good", this assertion needs to be

supported through documented client discussions, clear comparison of alternatives and showing what the client gives up in exchange (e.g. higher premium, longer waiting period). Regular reviews and follow-ups with clients not only help to build trust but also show the value of protection advice given if it has eased their financial stress or enabled continuity of lifestyle.

Product Innovation vs Adviser Tools: Are We Keeping Up?

Product innovation is happening through more flexible policies, digital underwriting, more nuanced riders (add-ons) and simpler claim processes. But are advisers getting the right tools to work with them?

Issues being raised:

- Products with fine-print and exclusions still too complex for many consumers to grasp.
- Digital tools (quote platforms, dashboards, comparison sites) that don't always illustrate the true cost to a client over time, deferred periods, medical underwriting or allow for transparency.

• Smaller independent firms struggling to find time or resource to keep pace with regulatory changes and subsequent product changes.

On the other hand, there are positive examples. Insurers have been focusing on producing product summaries in plain English with less insurance jargon. Some technology platforms are integrating value-comparison modules that highlight not just price and benefit amount but additional policy riders and add-ons. These allow advisers to show side by side what a client might be trading off for lower cost.

Protection's Role in Broader Financial Planning: Evolving Expectations

Consumers no longer see protection as just "insurance in case things go wrong" but as part of financial planning. They expect advisers to consider protection alongside savings, pensions, debt and lifestyle risks.

According to AML's 2024 Protection Viewpoint report, 41% of advisers say they are having more protection conversations with clients since

Consumer Duty took effect.

Advisers are also having to broaden the range of products discussed with more demand, not just for accident and sickness protection, but for unemployment too with 65% of Gen Z viewing income protection as being important compared to 48% of Gen X.

That shift means advisers must be ready, not only with the right products, but with explanations tied to clients' lives.

For advisers, the changes we are seeing in regulation should not be about ticking boxes, it should be about raising the bar on how advice is delivered and the quality of the products discussed. Consumer Duty is helping shift focus from just selling policies to genuinely delivering value and peace of mind. It is an opportunity to turn complexity into clarity, to use smarter tools and to build deeper trust with clients. Crucially, good protection advice is not just about a product, it is about helping people feel secure, informed and confident in their financial planning.

The desire to protect is part of our DNA



Alan Waddington
Director of Distribution
Cirencester Friendly



The first human appeared around 6 million years ago. Our species, Homo sapiens, also known as modern humans have been around for at least 300,000 years and possibly first appeared as long as 800,000 years ago. For most of our history, work involved tasks needed to stay alive such as hunting, gathering and finding shelter.

It is only relatively recently that other professions have emerged. In Tudor England, 90% of the UK population lived in rural communities earning their income from livestock or arable farming. When Queen Victoria came to the throne in 1837, more than half of the population still worked on the land.

This work had a clear value. It was essential to life. Indeed, it filled most waking hours, with very little spare time available to ordinary people.

While today, work looks very different for most and our lives would be unrecognisable to our ancestors. Humans are hardwired

with the urge to protect the things that are important to them and to find purpose and meaning to their lives.

We get pleasure from being useful, from making a positive contribution to society and feeling what we do makes a difference. While we no longer tend to depend directly on our neighbours for food or shelter, the desire to stay connected to them remains strong.

This need was underlined in the results of our recent research with almost 2,500 working people. We asked them if they would be likely to continue to work even if they didn't need to do so for financial reasons. More than half (51%) said they would

be likely. 7% said they were doing so already. Only 37% said they would be unlikely to carry on.

There is something deep within us that appreciates what work can offer beyond financial gain. We do not want to live in isolation. We want to help others and be productive.

Our survey showed this appeal was strongest in the youngest respondents, those aged between 18 and 34. Almost two-thirds of respondents (63%) said they would be likely to continue to work even if they didn't have to, which might be quite surprising given this generation is labelled "self-obsessed snowflakes."



Why is this important for us in the protection industry? Knowing what a crucial role work plays in people's lives should inform conversations when broaching the subject. Asking people what their work means to them, what they get out of it and how they would feel if they could no longer do it begins a discussion on what protection can offer and why it might be important to them.

Having protection in place means they have their essential bills covered so they can concentrate on

their recovery and focus on getting their old lives back without financial worries adding extra stress. It will also give them access to support services, such as virtual GPs or mental health provisions, that can aid with their rehabilitation.

Our survey shows that this desire to work is almost equally strong between men and women. 53% of men said they would be likely to continue to work if they didn't have to for financial reasons compared to 49% of women.

This is a conversation advisers should be asking all working people, whether they are single or in a relationship, homeowners or renters, a parent or childfree. It is something that everyone can relate to and showcases everything that income protection has to offer, positioning the added value services as an essential part of the cover that can support their innate desire to be productive and make a difference.

AI doesn't need coders. It needs coaches



Dominic Hadfield
Chief Technology Officer
Genie Connect Ltd



"Electric communication will never be a substitute for the face of someone who with their soul encourages another person to be brave and true." Charles Dickens

Despite being a tech-head, I'm inclined to agree with Mr Dickens, and even more so with the arrival of AI. His words, written in the 1850s about the electric telegraph, feel uncannily relevant today. Every technological leap triggers the same fear that machines will replace the human spark. Yet the opposite has always proved true, the spark endures; it just finds new ways to travel.

For years, progress belonged to those who could speak machine; coders and analysts who translated the world into zeroes and ones. But artificial intelligence has changed the dialect.

Machines know almost everything. What they lack is experience. They need context, judgement, and understanding that comes only from being human: messy, emotional, contradictory, brilliant.

The next great technology builders won't be those who write code, but those who can coach. The truth is that new coders will often be the

old faces, trainers, mentors, and seasoned professionals who've spent years helping others navigate complexity. They understand how people learn, decide, and find courage. That's the experience AI needs most.

Beyond the Chat - The Evolution of the Coder

For most people, AI still feels like a clever chat, a novelty that answers questions or tidies up data. Most of what's being built today focuses on efficiency: doing what we already do, just faster. But the real frontier isn't analytical, it's emotional. It's

about helping people listen, guide, and connect better.

The coder's role isn't disappearing; it's maturing. The smartest engineers I know are creating environments where AI can genuinely assist people, giving it a sort of CRM, a place to belong and work with **purpose**.

We've had fun chatting to AI, but the next step must be from conversation to collaboration, with the future not about giving AI personality but about giving it purpose.



That's the new artistry, not coding systems that act alone, but designing digital spaces where humans and machines work side by side, each doing what the other cannot.

AI as the Bridge Between Moments

Grocery shopping happens daily, so it's easy for brands to stay connected. Loyalty cards, offers, and reminders keep relationships alive between visits.

In professional services, the gap between transactions can stretch into years. You don't buy a house, invest, or review your life insurance every week. Genuine continuity is difficult, not because human connection is weak, but because the time between moments is too long to bridge manually.

Retention, recommendation, and referral bring the best return, but they depend on staying present long after the paperwork is done. That

kind of omnipresence is the Holy Grail, but not commercially viable for humans. That's where AI steps in.

Imagine if every adviser or customer-facing professional had an assistant that communicated intelligently with each client's digital companion in the quiet spaces between transactions. Guidance, reassurance, a nudge when it matters, all personalised, all continuous.

That's not automation. That's relationship continuity at scale, freeing humans to reappear when empathy and expertise are needed most.

From Replacement to Possibility

Every technological revolution begins with the same question, will machines take our jobs? The better question is, what becomes possible once they arrive? With the right design, AI won't erase roles, it will amplify experience. It

captures human judgement and makes it available everywhere. People who can explain not just what to do, but why, will train these systems to behave wisely.

Imagine if every great coach, mentor, or adviser could bottle their instincts so others could draw on them in real time. That's not science fiction; it's a design brief and starts by pairing human empathy with digital discipline.

The Future Needs You

The next chapter of progress won't be written by algorithms alone. It will be co-authored by the people who know how to teach machines what truly matters.

Those who can guide with empathy, translate complexity into clarity, and understand what makes us trust, decide, and care; they're the ones AI is waiting for.

The future needs you!



“As tech becomes ever more embedded in our workflows and daily work lives, the goal must be to strike a strategic balance between digital efficiency with automation and the essential human touch element within the protection journey. We must leverage these technologies for their strengths, which can be to automate high volume, potentially time consuming tasks like pre underwriting research, data information gathering and application submissions. This not only streamlines the advisor’s workflow but frees up their time to spend on more high yielding, more valuable areas such as advising on their needs and to protect their assets. We are now starting to see automation processes interlink with completely new AI based technologies and therefore are now seeing automation and personalisation move to the next level and connect more than ever.”



iress

Josh Hart, Business Development Manager, Iress



“Thriving in the new age of protection starts with how we communicate. Language matters - whether we’re making the case for protection or explaining improvements in definitions, service, or claims.

Clients want conversations that feel real, not technical. Avoid jargon and swap complex terms for words that resonate. Say “keeping your home secure” instead of “mortgage protection”.

Use stories to make protection relatable. Keep it simple. Keep it human. Clear, confident language builds trust and understanding. In a market full of complexity, clarity is your differentiator as an adviser. Write the way you speak - like you would with friends.

And don’t overlook technology to make life easier. We’re not all language experts and time is stretched. AI tools can help write client-friendly communications and check tone and clarity faster than we can ourselves. Combine AI support with your human touch and firm values, and we’ll all thrive - clients most of all.



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Rachael Welsh, Head of Marketing and PR, Guardian



Introducing Airi: The future of learning at the IPTF



Vicky Churcher
Executive Director
Income Protection Task Force (IPTF)



At the Income Protection Task Force (IPTF), our mission has always been to champion education, awareness, and understanding of income protection. We've spent years engaging with advisers, insurers, and the wider financial community to make sure that more people truly understand the importance of protecting their income. But as the world changes, so must the way we communicate.

We're all living in an age of information overload. Attention spans are shrinking, social media dominates how we learn and share, and the way we consume knowledge has evolved dramatically. Long-form reports and technical papers still have their place, but more and more people prefer short, visual, and easily digestible content. Just look at platforms like TikTok and Instagram, people want knowledge delivered quickly, clearly, and creatively.

That's why at the IPTF, we believe it's time to embrace innovation and that includes harnessing the power of Artificial Intelligence (AI).

Harnessing AI for Better Education

AI is reshaping industries across the world, and the protection sector is no exception. At the IPTF, we see this not as a challenge, but as an opportunity. We believe in using AI to make our educational resources more engaging, personalised, and accessible.

In 2026, we'll be taking a new step forward by integrating AI into the heart of our education and communication strategy. Our goal is simple: to help the market understand income protection more effectively and to do so in a way that fits how people actually like to learn today.

To achieve this, we've created something very special, our own AI-powered digital ambassador: **Airi**.

Meet Airi – The Voice of Insight and Education

Pronounced Air-re, Airi is more than just an avatar. She represents the next chapter in how we share knowledge at the IPTF. Her name carries layers of meaning: in Japanese and Finnish, it's associated with reason, understanding, and guidance. At the IPTF, we've given it our own twist – A.I. Resilience Insurance which reflects both her purpose and her personality.

Meet
Airi

IPTF's AI Training Companion



wisdom
wednesday

Airi's mission is clear: to support advisers, insurers, IPTF members and the wider industry by making knowledge more accessible, relevant, and engaging than ever before.

Education Made Simple and Engaging

We know that not everyone has the time to read lengthy reports or attend in-depth seminars. Airi's role is to bring information to life and to turn complex topics into bite-sized, easy-to-digest learning moments. Whether it's explaining how income protection products work, demystifying claims processes, or exploring market trends, Airi makes learning simple, visual, and even fun.

We've also been paying close attention to how people prefer to learn and connect online. More and more, short-form video content is the way forward as it's quick, accessible, and fits naturally into busy lives. Taking that into account, we're excited to announce a brand-

new initiative for 2026: **Wisdom Wednesday**.

Introducing Wisdom Wednesday

Starting in early 2026, every Wednesday, we'll release a short video that's no longer than 90 seconds, across our social media platforms. These clips, presented by Airi, will share key insights about income protection, market developments, and adviser support.

Think of it as a weekly dose of protection wisdom. A quick, engaging way to stay informed and inspired. Each "Wisdom Wednesday" episode will focus on a single topic: from industry trends and statistics to practical tips and case studies.

Our aim is to spark conversation, challenge assumptions, and make learning about income protection something everyone looks forward to.

Leading the Way in AI-Driven Education

For us, this is more than a marketing project. It's our first foray into using AI effectively and responsibly within our own organisation. Airi embodies our belief that technology should help us communicate better, learn faster, and engage more deeply.

We also see Airi as a bridge between data and understanding by taking the numbers, research, and detail that can sometimes feel overwhelming, and transforming them into meaningful, human-centred bite-sized insights.

Airi represents innovation, collaboration, and progress, the very values the IPTF stands for.

So, keep an eye out for her and for our first **Wisdom Wednesday** release early next year. We can't wait to introduce you properly. After all, learning about income protection shouldn't feel complicated, it should feel empowering. And with Airi by our side, it just got a lot more exciting.

“ When Progress Becomes a Problem: The Challenge of Modern Diagnostics in CI

Advances in medical diagnostics are improving outcomes for patients, but they're also challenging the sustainability of critical illness cover. As detection becomes faster and earlier, insurers and reinsurers face a growing question: can critical illness plans be future-proofed? Will the constant improvements to diagnostic techniques increase claims beyond the actuarial levels originally assumed, rendering the plans unsustainable?

With life insurance, improved longevity provides a financial cushion but CIC plans are a different matter. Over the years we have seen major changes such as regular prostate cancer testing altering the cancer claim wording and coronary angioplasty changing from a full 100% payment into an additional payment condition.

A few years back, the ABI's model cancer wording was altered to remove Stage 1 thyroid cancer. Initially they planned on removing all types of thyroid cancer, in a sharp response to South Korean CIC claims quadrupling due to MRI scans detecting the condition at a very early stage prompting firms to spring up offering free scans in exchange for a percentage of the claim payout.

Fortunately, this phenomenon didn't spread to the UK but it is not a stretch to imagine another innovative detection technique appearing and creating a similar panic amongst the product developers. The concern is whether the impact of these diagnostic improvements spells the death knell for critical illness cover, making it either too expensive or too riddled with exclusions to remain a viable product.

Thus far the industry has managed to adapt and preserve the integrity of the product without making plans too expensive for consumers to consider, but the pressure to stay ahead of medical progress is far from over.

Alan Lakey, Director, CIExpert



Get in touch

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