

**SIPPS»** John Moret, director of sales and marketing at Suffolk Life, talks about offering a dedicated and flexible Sipp service that provides a range of options backed by an expert team

# Building a market-leading position on good service

“Sipps have the potential to be the major individual pension savings vehicle of the future”



John Moret, Suffolk Life’s respected director of sales and marketing, is proud that the company has become synonymous with providing consistently high levels of service to those wanting access to its Sipps.

“We have built our reputation on providing a bespoke service at the top end of the Sipp market where flexibility and choice is all important,” he says. “It is something we are fiercely determined not only to protect, but also to build on in the future.”

Most financial advisers will be familiar with the Suffolk Life Sipp that closed to new business in October 2007, and its successor, the Suffolk Life MasterSipp, both of which have attracted a strong and satisfied following of customers.

But while Suffolk Life is committed to growing its business and accelerating its position as the market leader at the bespoke end of the market, it is also looking at what it could offer to the fast-developing hybrid area.

“We have certainly got the right platform on which to run a slimmed-down version of our MasterSipp and we are considering the opportunities,” says Mr Moret. “This is an area that has become very popular in recent times, so it should not be overlooked.”

These hybrid products – which have been described as halfway houses between a traditional personal pension scheme and a full-blown Sipp – have the possibility of enjoying rapid growth, with investors being attracted by the proposition.

“The key to these products is the fact they are priced very much more competitively than full Sipps,” points out Mr Moret. “This means we will have to find a way of delivering such a product, but also make the venture profitable.”

Suffolk Life has certainly got the capability to make such a move. The award-

winning company has £3bn-worth of Sipp assets and roughly 13,000 self-invested plans, meaning the average investment portfolio is worth approximately £250,000.

“Our proposition is built around service delivery and quality,” he says. “We may not be the cheapest – in fact, that might send out the wrong signals – but we provide a reliable, quality product and service that meet expectations.”

Perhaps most important is the fact the company is set up to provide a dedicated service to the Sipps market. This means its focused expertise, commitment to service excellence and knowledge make it an extremely powerful force within the industry.

## Long-term view

As a Sipp specialist, Suffolk Life is also used to taking a long-term view as far as Sipps and the pensions market are concerned. “This includes the relationships we build with advisers, the products we provide and the services that we offer,” explains Mr Moret. “Our success in this regard is illustrated by the number of awards and accreditations we have clocked up over the years.”

There are certainly plenty of compelling reasons to select Suffolk Life, including a proven track record of excellent service delivery; experienced, knowledgeable staff members; and investment in technology with fully web-compliant systems.

Other benefits include providing good value, high levels of technical competence and readily available expertise, as well as a proven track record in property purchase and administration within a Sipp.

“No one can deny that establishing a Sipp is a more complicated area of financial planning,” says Mr Moret. “Having access to a quality administration and providing a consistent delivery of service

are of paramount importance – although this is not always fully appreciated.”

For many years, Suffolk Life has been acknowledged as a leading Sipp specialist, and advisers using the Suffolk Life MasterSipp have access to knowledgeable staff, backed by efficient systems, ensuring a consistent level of service.

“Choosing Suffolk Life ensures that these fundamental requirements, together with fair pricing, are satisfied,” says Mr Moret.

“The feedback we have received from many satisfied advisers proves our proposition is meeting their needs.”

As an example of continued investment in technology, the business is electronically linked to more than 30 discretionary investment managers, providing a more streamlined and accurate administration service.

The company was one of the first to accept self-investment of protected rights. More than 1,500 clients have utilised this facility, allowing these funds to be invested in a variety of areas, including unit trusts, Oeics, direct equities and commercial property.

### Wide choice

The company’s commitment to quality can be seen in its MasterSipp, which attracted plenty of industry plaudits for offering one of the widest choices on the market for protected rights benefits.

“We believe our MasterSipp reinforces our position at the top end of this market,” Mr Moret says. “As well as ticking most of the boxes that most advisers and investors would need, we feel it also represents value for money.”

The idea behind the launch of the offering, which became available at the back end of 2007, was to provide customers with a greater degree of investment flexibility, along with the facility to self-invest protected rights money.

The other reason was to tackle the problem of life companies being restricted in their investment choices. “Products written under a life-company contract are unable to accept certain investments, such as certain hedge funds and derivatives,” he says. “With our MasterSipp, we were able to address both those issues.”

He adds: “We wanted to make the self-investment of protected rights available immediately rather than wait for the government to change the legislation, because at the time we did not know when – or even if – this would happen.”

Protected rights can also be used to assist with the purchase of commercial property, raising the possibility of additional purchasing power through increased borrowing and joint property purchases.

Moreover, from May 1 this year, the additional establishment and annual fees for protected rights have been removed, provided Sipp investors elect for their

protected rights investments to be pooled with investments in respect of their ordinary pension benefits.

“We believe that our MasterSipp is attractive to clients, advisers and investment managers,” says Mr Moret. “The new pricing and pooling approach for protected rights should make it even more attractive.”

All these factors, along with the benefits of an award-winning service, comprehensive online support, extensive technical expertise and efficient administration, make the Suffolk Life MasterSipp proposition a tough one to beat.

So what will be the longer-term definition of success for the Suffolk Life MasterSipp?

“From our perspective, it will be continuing to grow the business and accelerating our position as a market leader at the bespoke end of the market,” he says. “Growth in our overall market share, therefore, will be an indicator of success.”

As far as advisers are concerned, a measure of success will be how convenient they find it to use the Suffolk Life MasterSipp in dealing with the total pension wealth of their clients.

“Our MasterSipp provides a one-hit solution, avoiding the need to deal with several different pension providers, which has been the traditional solution. For investors, success ultimately will come down to the growth of their pensions wealth as a consequence of the investment performance of their Sipp.”

The industry’s long-term future – and for Sips, in particular – is attractive.

“Sips have the potential to be the major individual pension savings vehicle of the future,” he says. “We believe our MasterSipp – and any other products that we may launch in the future – will help us secure a growing share of this market.”

It is an area of business Mr Moret believes is full of potential.

“Retirement planning is now a priority for many people, and this provides as many challenges as opportunities for those of us working in the pension industry. Defined benefit schemes are disappearing fast and people are looking at alternatives.”

Suffolk Life is committed to the Sipp market and to facilitating the development of Sipp business for advisers with suitable clients by making the initial and ongoing administration as straightforward and reliable as possible. Technology in conjunction with knowledgeable and experienced people will be crucial.

“We are proud of our hard-earned reputation and the fact we have established ourselves as one of the market leaders,” says Mr Moret.

“Looking to the future, we have every intention of remaining a major force in this market by continuing to provide advisers with an exceptional level of service.”

# CV

## JOHN MORET

**2004** Suffolk Life, director of sales and marketing

**2000** Personal Pension Management, managing director and then executive chairman

**1986** Provident Life (then Winterthur Life), pensions manager and then director of sales and marketing

**1983** UK Provident (then Friends Provident), assistant manager – individual pensions

**OTHER** In 1999, Mr Moret was the first to predict there would be 500,000 Sips by 2010 – current figures show he was right