

SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT GUIDANCE NOTES



What is a Supportive Environment?

The Supportive Environment is about what your firm/professional network (referred to in this document as firm) provides that enables and supports you in your role as a specialist in later life advice.

You must be able to demonstrate that you benefit from an organisational commitment to Continuing Professional Development that is relevant to advising older clients.

When writing your Supportive Environment statement – you are required to describe how the firm tangibly demonstrates its commitment and support for later life advice.

For those working in highly specialised practice:

In this situation, this may be an intrinsic provision of the firm. Network members, for example, may be able to demonstrate background support facilities for compliance, product analysis and report writing – but this may not be specific to later life advice and as such will not meet the requirements of this standard.

For sole traders, or organisations in which a single member of staff provides later life advice:

There may not be a supportive environment provided by the organisation – in which case to meet this standard candidates must consider:

- How to work with the firm / organisation to create such support
- Where they may have access to support from outside the firm / organisation

For those who are the principal / director of their own firm:

Although the context may be different (e.g. you are providing your own Supportive Environment), there is still a requirement to demonstrate an organisational commitment to later life advice, which can be supplemented with details of additional support frameworks outside the firm.

Summary

The concept of a Supportive Environment is therefore an issue of organisational culture – which should be present in firms of all sizes. Formal assessment of such a concept is unique to this accreditation, and therefore unfamiliar to candidates. Culture is not always an easy thing to define – so to make things clearer, let's look at what is and what isn't a Supportive Environment:

What it is

A Supportive Environment is where you are supported by your firm to be an effective adviser to older clients – which means:

- There is access to, or the provision of, technical and practical information allowing the adviser to acquire, maintain and improve their relevant knowledge and skills in the area of older client advice.
- There is an established (and documented) process to review and identify the areas of your later life knowledge and skills that require updating. Ideally the firm has a requirement within their Training & Competence scheme to demonstrate that they have ensured the adviser has acquired and maintained their knowledge and skills in this area.
- Apart from your general CPD the firm provides, supports and / or funds relevant training & development that enables greater knowledge and understanding of Later Life advice issues, solutions and research.
- The firm demonstrates a commitment to Later Life advice, by carrying out and / or supporting research into issues and solutions that affect older people and their finances. Updating its policies and procedures in line with relevant legislative changes.
- The firm perhaps has established relationships with other specialists advising in other areas of advice relevant to older people (e.g. solicitors) for the sharing knowledge and best practice – or perhaps an associations / links with a relevant community group, charity or care sector organisation

What it isn't

A supportive Environment is not:

- Business Development, marketing or lead generation
- Compliance or admin / office support
- Provisions made for the client (although these are obviously important)

Remember, the Supportive Environment is about how you are supported by your firm to be an effective adviser to older clients

How Supportive Environment is assessed for the LLAA

Candidates are asked to describe the features of their Supportive Environment by answering the following questions as part of their Self Audit submission.

The auditor may choose to highlight one or two aspects of your Supportive Environment statement for discussion during your Interview – but ultimately, it is the Review Panel that makes the assessment of your Supportive Environment responses (and any resulting comments from the auditor) in order to determine whether you have met this standard.

Question 1: What resources are provided by your firm to keep your knowledge on later life issues updated? Please provide three specific examples.

Some examples of resources are listed below:

- Information, materials and courses available through membership of appropriate organisations
- Subscription to appropriate publications, newsletters etc
- Online learning sources, reference sites and forums
- Technical support, helpdesks or bulletins (relevant to later life advice)
- Internal training support facilities - intranet, knowledge resources
- Attendance at relevant conferences and training events
- Links with relevant trade bodies or industry groups
- Access to knowledge based resources
- Research
- Peer group support

Question 2: What process does your firm use to identify the areas of your later life knowledge and skills which require updating? How is this process documented?

Include links to ongoing Training & Competence requirements that address any identified limitations to an adviser's knowledge of the products / market / structure of care provision and related areas of older client advice.

Question 3: Excluding compliance and business development, please explain how the firm supports your development activities and your capability to effectively advise in the later life market?

Is time / support / funding given for your study and so as to keep up to date with the latest issues - such as recent policy reforms, Government papers and bills, and legislation generally relating to age. Is any other kind of support made available to you (technical advice, guidance) either within the firm or as part of its contact network? Are there any other professional bodies or relevant groups that you belong to that provide support in the Later Life advice arena? Is there anything else that you can tangibly describe about your firm or its culture that lends itself to supporting your work in the older client market?