

The Mortgage AWARDS 2024

Winners Brochure

29 February 2024

The Waldorf Hilton, London

Celebrating excellence within the UK mortgage industry

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Winners 2024



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Contents & selected winners

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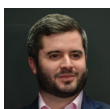
Overview & judging panel

Overview

The Waldorf Hilton, London, was the venue for the Mortgage Awards 2024 as hundreds of mortgage professionals came together to celebrate excellence within the UK's vibrant mortgage industry. Comedian, Jen Brister, hosted the evening and helped to present the trophies to the winners. Congratulations to all the prize winners on the night, to the highly commended firms recognised by the judges, and to all the companies who were shortlisted at this year's event.

We would like to offer our thanks to all those who helped make this year's awards such a success, including our supporters, the Financial Intermediary & Broker Association (FIBA), the London Institute of Banking & Finance (LIBF), and the Society of Mortgage Professionals. Our thanks must also go to the judges and everyone who entered and attended this year's event. We look forward to welcoming you back to the Mortgage Awards with open arms again in 2025.

2024 Judging panel



Chair of the judges:

Adam Cadle

Editor

MoneyAge



Richard Beardshaw

Head of Sales

HSBC UK for Intermediaries



David Burrowes

Chair

Equity Release Council



Greg Cunnington

Chief Operating Officer

LDNfinance



Karen Rodrigues

Head of National Accounts

Market Financial Solutions



Louisa Sedgwick

Commercial Director

Paragon Banking Group



Robert Sinclair

Chief Executive

AMI and AFB



Adam Tyler

FIBA consultant



Sally Wright

National Account Manager

Paragon Banking Group

The Mortgage AWARDS 2024

Winners 2024

The winners

First-time Buyer Mortgage Lender of the Year

Winner: Newcastle Building Society

Specialist Lender of the Year

Winner: Paragon Bank

Large Loans Mortgage Lender of the Year

Winner: Metro Bank

Second Charge Mortgage Lender of the Year

Winner: Central Trust

Shared Ownership Mortgage Lender of the Year

Winner: Leeds Building Society

Later Life Lender of the Year

Winner: Aviva

Bank Mortgage Provider of the Year

Winner: HSBC UK

Overall Mortgage Lender of the Year

Winner: HSBC UK

Small Broker of the Year

Winner: Prolific Mortgage Finance

Specialist Broker of the Year

Winner: Dynamo

Best Buy-to-Let Broker of the Year

Winner: Dynamo

Equity Release Broker of the Year

Winner: Age Partnership

Best Broker for Short-term Lending

Winner: SPF Private Clients

Later Life Broker of the Year

Winner: Mortgage Advice Bureau Later Life

Best New Homes Broker of the Year

Winner: Threshold Financial Services

Overall Broker of the Year

Winner: Mortgage Advice Bureau

Building Society of the Year

Winner: Darlington Building Society

Best Newcomer in the Mortgage Space

Winner: Kerr & Watson

Best Innovation in the Mortgage Space

Winner: Pure Retirement

Mortgage Surveyor of the Year

Winner: Gateway Surveyors

Mortgage Conveyancer of the Year

Winner: SortRefer

Mortgage Technology Provider of the Year

Winner: Target Group

Mortgage Lender Customer Service of the Year

Winner: HSBC UK

Best Mortgage Club of the Year

Winner: Legal & General Mortgage Club

ESG Initiative of the Year

Winner: Chorley Building Society

Diversity Initiative of the Year

Winner: Working in Mortgages

The Mortgage AWARDS 2024

Specialist Lender of the Year

Paragon Bank



In the Specialist Lender of the Year category, the winning firm should display healthy loan books with strong financial results. Our judges also look for a firm that has revolutionised its offerings to meet customer needs.

This year's winning specialist lender, Paragon Bank, particularly impressed the judges after showcasing an outstanding financial performance in a volatile environment.

Having won the Specialist Lender of the Year at the Mortgage Awards in 2021, Paragon Bank celebrated another successful 12 months last year.

In December, Paragon released its full year results and revealed how it grew its mortgages loan book by 4.7% in the year to 30 September 2023, on the back of strong trading and retention performance. The mortgages loan book at the end of Paragon's full-year period stood at £12.9bn, compared to £12.3bn at the same point a year earlier, after benefitting from good customer retention and robust levels of new lending.

New buy-to-let lending also outperformed the market despite challenging economic conditions. Total mortgage

originations were broadly flat at £1.9bn, partly due to Paragon's pipeline hedging policy protecting customers from rate volatility at the time of the 2022 mini-Budget.

Setting Paragon apart from competitors has been its experience and expertise in limited company lending. Throughout last year, the lender supported an increasing number of landlords in this area as more look to mitigate the impact of the challenging economic environment by benefitting from tax efficiencies and lower levels of stress testing.

A key way that Paragon supports brokers is through providing direct access to underwriters. As part of its manual application assessment, cases are reviewed by underwriters on the same day they are received and subsequently discussed in detail with brokers to ensure they can be processed efficiently, regardless of how complex they may be.

The judges also praised Paragon for its investment in technology. Throughout the past year, Paragon has invested heavily in a digital transformation programme that will ultimately deliver market-leading service and address many of the frustrations that brokers helped Paragon to pinpoint during extensive engagement via their online research and development community.

A digital platform, tailored to meet the needs of stakeholders, is helping Paragon to become more data-driven and giving staff the tools to ultimately make them more efficient. This has seen Paragon remove much of the labour-intensive work using application programming interfaces (APIs), which provide trusted data at the touch of a button.

Staff time and expertise at the firm can be more effectively utilised, which is another key reason behind the judges' choice to reward Paragon with the Specialist Lender of the Year. Our congratulations once again go to Paragon Bank for an outstanding performance in the last year.



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Building Society of the Year

Darlington Building Society



The Building Society of the Year recognises the Society that has proved itself ahead of its peers in terms of product provision and customer service, and also demonstrated a true understanding of the needs of the consumer.

This year's winner, Darlington Building Society, impressed the judges by recognising the importance of supporting first-time buyers onto the housing ladder to ultimately support the overall health of the housing market.

With a mutual approach, Darlington Building Society channels resources, knowledge, and expertise into supporting its members, colleagues, and communities. The Society is a regional powerhouse dedicated to championing local communities in the North East.

Darlington Building Society also won the Building Society of the Year award in 2021, and while cost-of-living challenges are now posing more significant difficulties for many people, the Society remains a key pillar for people in the region.

Its innovative support for first-time buyers was particularly praised by the judges, including its move to become the first lender to collaborate with Own New to boost access to 95%

loan-to-value (LTV) mortgages for those purchasing new-build homes with participating builders.

The judges also recognised the Society's community impact. As well as maintaining its pledge to donate 5% of its profits before tax to local good causes – distributing grants of more than £158,000 to 42 community organisations – it delivered financial education to 1,400 schoolchildren in 2023.

Last year, the Society launched its new and improved platform, Darlingtonline – where members can manage their accounts and mortgages – providing a better digital experience and the infrastructure to support digital account opening. The Society has also undertaken key work to enhance the broker journey via its Iress mortgage hub, streamlining the straightforward elements of more complex mortgage applications.

According to the judges, Darlington Building Society has also shown it is well adept at equally considering both its savers and its borrowers. During the 14 consecutive Bank of England base rate increases since December 2021, the Society has passed on as much as possible to savers and restricted increases to borrowers as far as practicably possible.

For savers, the Society paid on average a rate that was 0.84% higher than the market average (3.31% vs 2.47%) last year, meaning that over the course of 2023 Darlington Building Society savers were £6m better off than if they had savings accounts paying the market average rate offered by the largest banks (CACI data).

Conversely for borrowers, the Society repositioned its mortgage SVR from being in the top quartile in December 2021 to 8.09%, which is less than the market average of 8.18%.

We send our congratulations to the North East and to all the team at Darlington Building Society for an outstanding performance in the last year.

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- 5.5x LTI for **higher earners** who earn £60k+ or joint applicants who earn £90k+, supporting more people onto the property ladder, allowing them to find their dream home.
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Darlington
Intermediaries

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Best Buy-to-Let Broker of the Year

Highly Commended: Mortgage Lane



The Best Buy-to-Let (BTL) Broker of the Year category rewards the broker in the BTL market that has achieved fantastic customer service over the past year, as well as delivering strong performance to complement quality advice.

This year's category saw Mortgage Lane recognised by the judges as a highly commended firm.

Created in 2018, Joseph Lane started the company alone at the age of just 23-years-old, and has since grown the firm significantly, getting directly authorised by the FCA, as well as employing and training 16 employees.

Within the office, Mortgage Lane has one broker to two case managers and therefore keeps all advice robust, and the organisation immaculate. The broker aims for a 24-hour response speed with every email account cleared by 6pm, to ensure communication is at its strongest, while not missing any opportunities.

Mortgage Lane's clients are mainly property investors, which also includes applicants that are first-time investors buying properties under time constraints. Many property investors that Mortgage Lane deals with are unable to get

access to their properties for valuations, either due to COVID concerns or lack of relationship with the tenant.

However, the broker has been able to work with lenders that will value the property on an AVM basis, which has helped it to avoid access issues, and this has been very successful in remortgaging clients affected by this yet stuck on their current product subject to the standard variable rate (SVR).

Director Joseph Lane also regularly uploads video explanations on using AVMs and how they differ from other digital valuation methods, such as desktop valuations – a neat feature which was also signalled for praise by the judging panel.

Fintech is also a key priority for Mortgage Lane, allowing the firm to maximise efficiency and reduce the amount of time spent on an application, as well as covering compliance responsibilities in a robust manor. The judges praised Mortgage Lane's CRM system, which has been fully customised to interlink with specific processes outlined by lenders in isolation.

This way, the firm's case managers have a definitive blueprint of pipeline process for each specialist avenue. As part of this customisation, the broker's task allocation is set with timescales to distribute case management fairly and effectively, while being able to produce KPIs for formal reviews.

Mortgage Lane has shown it is passionate about securing the best mortgage for its customers regardless of circumstances. It has now provided thousands of mortgages to clients, from buying their first property, to purchasing additional properties through limited companies.

We offer our congratulations to Mortgage Lane for showcasing a high-quality performance over the last year worthy of the judges' recognition.

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Best Innovation in the Mortgage Space

Pure Retirement



The award for Best Innovation in the Mortgage Space looks to reward brokers, lenders or tech providers that have displayed the highest degree of innovation in their mortgage product offering, or within their wider use of technology across the company.

This year's winner was Pure Retirement, after the judges praised the lender for the number of key processes completed on its MyPure platform.

Pure Retirement is a dedicated equity release lender that offers customers market-leading lifetime mortgage solutions with flexibility at their core. The firm believes that supporting advisers and customers is based on continued innovation that strives to enhance the user experience.

As a believer in technology-led service, Pure Retirement launched the MyPure platform as a new way for customers to easily manage their lifetime mortgage accounts online, allowing users to make one-off repayments, or apply for a cash release.

The development of MyPure has been designed to not only deliver greater convenience to the end consumer, but

also greater empowerment and self-control. The platform has also been designed to feed into the FCA's Consumer Duty regulation framework, which was introduced by the regulator in July last year.

It does this by providing customers with an alternative method to access the key information and features surrounding their account, a process that ultimately makes customers less reliant on office-based staff.

MyPure enables Pure Retirement customers to view their accounts, and to download documents such as annual statements. Customers are also notified when new documents become available and have the ability to complete their Certificate of Continuing Occupancy online.

Customers with drawdown plans are able to apply for a cash release online, massively streamlining the process compared to postal methods, and additional queries will also be reduced as applicants are guided throughout the journey to ensure all necessary information is captured.

Ad-hoc payments can also be made via MyPure as an added convenience for plan holders, with the platform also enabling the set-up of recurring regular payments if customers so wish.

The degree to which MyPure has resonated among Pure Retirement's customer base can best be illustrated by the significant number of key processes completed by the 4,800 customers via the platform in 2023.

This includes a total of 1,200 Certificates of Continued Occupancy completed, 660 Cash Release applications submitted, 359 one-off optional repayments made, as well as 106 direct debits arranged – all figures that hugely impressed this year's judges at the Mortgage Awards and helped Pure Retirement clinch the Best Innovation in the Mortgage Space.

Congratulations to all the team at Pure Retirement for the success of the MyPure platform. A true display of innovation.

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First-time Buyer Mortgage Lender of the Year

Newcastle Building Society



With all the options available today, finding the best mortgage lender can be a frustrating and time-consuming experience.

The First-time Buyer Mortgage Lender of the Year category looks to reward the firm offering the best advice, products, and rates, while also receiving glowing reports from its customers.

This year's winning firm was Newcastle Building Society, after the judges were impressed by its support for first-time buyers and in particular its propositions for First Homes and Shared Ownership schemes, delivered through its intermediary arm: Newcastle for Intermediaries.

The society recorded an 8.5% increase in new mortgage customers in 2023 as it helped thousands of first-time buyers realise their dream of owning their own home.

Newcastle Building Society has dedicated itself to assisting customers in achieving their goal of homeownership and boasts a particularly strong first-time buyer proposition, which offers a suite of products such as First Homes and Shared Ownership – the key areas that

caught the judges' eyes.

The society was one of the first lenders to roll out the Government-led First Homes scheme, supporting key workers across England with homes at a discount of at least 30% against the market price. This discount remains on the property forever to support the future generation of first-time buyers and key workers who are getting on to the property ladder.

As well as providing the First Homes scheme, Newcastle also strengthened its commitment to first-time buyers and movers alike by introducing its well-received Shared Ownership proposition in England. The society continues to help buyers that are struggling to get onto the property ladder, offering an alternative, flexible route to homeownership.

In another demonstration of its care for first-time buyers, Newcastle Building Society continues to recognise that the process of purchasing a first home can be daunting and complicated for prospective buyers. That's why it employs underwriters to support brokers on a case-by-case basis, helping find solutions to the individual circumstances of each customer.

Amid the cost-of-living crisis, the society has redoubled its efforts to help first-time buyers through the financial squeeze with its Shared Ownership and First Homes mortgage products.

Both offerings demonstrate the importance of collaboration in the mortgage industry, and both offerings were signalled for high praise from the judges as they recognised Newcastle Building Society as the First-Time Buyer Mortgage Lender of the Year.

Congratulations to all the team at Newcastle Building Society for an outstanding performance in the last year and a hugely deserved award.

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Later Life Lender of the Year

Aviva



The Later Life Lender of the Year category aims to reward the firm that has displayed robust business performance, strong degrees of innovation, and satisfaction across its client base.

Aviva was named the Later Life Lender of the Year after the judges were impressed with its launch of new tech into the later life lending market, as well as the firm's efforts in 2023 to increase its market share.

Over the last year, Aviva further solidified its position at the forefront of the equity release market, displaying the necessary thought leadership and industry presence for advisers and customers to successfully navigate through one of the most uncertain financial industries.

Most impressive to the judges was Aviva's new digital capability, which has taken the group's equity release service to a whole new level. Last year saw the launch of the firm's much-anticipated digital platform, further positioning Aviva as a provider which is competently able to guide advisers in finding a solution right for their customers.

Client satisfaction also continues to be high at the firm.

Ever innovating, Aviva has smoothed the entire digital process through the launch of a digital quote, apply, and tracking platform, a much-awaited digital capability that ensures greater ease for advisers.

With an improved business system and customer interface, doing business with Aviva has become even simpler and means there is no need to go round the houses when getting equity release sorted.

Already in 2024, Aviva has also added further advances to the functionality of the platform, making the lender's online quote, apply and tracking system a one-stop shop for its flexible lifetime mortgage product.

Last year, Aviva also continued to demonstrate support for the wider later life lending market during tough economic conditions. The firm has supported the market through targeted webinar activity on topics including the housing market and the Financial Conduct Authority's Consumer Duty regulation, returning strong engagement statistics across the board – with an average of 90.4% of advisers finding the webinars "good" or "very good".

Aviva has recently celebrated 25 years of unbroken lending in the equity release market. The firm has been a constant throughout this period and has proved itself time and again to the adviser and customer communities that it is a leading firm in this market.

As well as digitally smoothing the whole equity release process, Aviva continues to provide some of the most flexible lending criteria despite challenging market conditions, enabling it to remain as one of the UK's most established and trusted providers, helping over 284,000 people release more than £11bn in property wealth.

Congratulations to everyone at Aviva for an outstanding performance in the last year and a thoroughly deserved award.

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