

Social matters

Customers

Our customers are at the heart of what we do and are a key part of our success. Through the breadth of our product offering, excellent customer service and close relationships with our intermediaries, we aim to be our customers' financial provider of choice.

Group's pledge to Landlord Leaders Fund

£50m

New savings accounts opened

over 191k
2021: over 44k

To achieve this goal, we use an established governance framework for consistent best practice across the business and ensure that we have robust policies and procedures to minimise the risk of failure to deliver the quality of service our savers and borrowers have come to expect.

The main policies which govern how we transact with our customers are:

- Lending policy – ensures that we lend responsibly and within the Group's lending criteria and risk appetite.
- Customer vulnerability policy – sets out the standards and approach for the identification and treatment of vulnerable customers and provides guidance to ensure that these customers consistently receive fair outcomes. The Group's employees are trained to identify vulnerability and put in place appropriate actions to deal with issues as effectively as possible. We are committed to delivering fair and suitable outcomes to all customers based on their individual circumstances.
- Arrears management and forbearance policy – ensures that handling of arrears delivers fair and suitable outcomes tailored to the circumstances of the individual customer. The policy is focused on seeking to work proactively with customers to prevent them falling into arrears or to cure the arrears position to deliver the best possible outcome.

There are also policies that apply to the business as a whole and govern our operations, including Data protection and retention policies, Conduct risk framework and our Complaints handling policy.

In 2022, the Group commenced a project to implement the FCA's Consumer Duty rules and requirements, which further focus on customer vulnerability and improve our customers' experience by putting their needs first.

The main way of engaging with our savings customers is via telephone, online or directly in our nine Kent Reliance branches in the south east England. All our mortgage products are distributed by mortgage intermediaries across England and Scotland and our experienced Sales teams maintain strong relationships with them. The surveys conducted on behalf of the Group revealed that in 2022, we received over 4,000 survey responses from intermediaries, almost 7,000 responses from borrowers and over 46,000 responses from savers.

We are proud that in 2022, our efforts to provide transparent and competitive products were recognised by the mortgage and savings industries: Kent Reliance for Intermediaries was awarded Best Specialist Lender by L&G Mortgage Club and Precise Mortgages was named The Best Specialist Lender by the MABs Awards. In addition, Kent Reliance won the Best Cash ISA Provider from Yourmoney.com Personal Finance Awards and Charter Savings Bank was named ISA Provider of the Year by Moneyfacts.

We also measure and closely monitor Net Promoter Scores (NPSs) for our savings customers and intermediaries which indicate their satisfaction with our services and products. Savings customer NPS was +64 for Kent Reliance and +61 for Charter Savings Bank, both strong results in light of eight base rate rises that prompted many savers to choose new products, and across our two brands we opened over 191,000 new savings accounts, more than double that in 2021.

The broker NPS decreased to +37 for OSB and +39 for CCFS in 2022, both impacted by high application and completion volumes as a result of the market disruption following September's mini budget. As a leading specialist lender, we have the breadth of mortgage products, ability to make rapid decisions and expertise in structuring borrowers' portfolios, all of which were particularly valued by our customers during that time. To further provide our customers and intermediaries with the certainty of funding, the Group honoured both our offered and pre-offered applications in the fourth quarter of 2022.

We are conscious that our borrowers are facing more uncertainty in their investment decisions given the elevated focus on the energy efficiency of the properties they own or are considering purchasing. In a move to lead the sector's approach, the Group published the Landlord Leaders research report in November, which surveyed the Private Rented Sector in light of these environmental challenges. As a result, the Group pledged £50m to the newly-established Landlord Leaders Fund to assist landlords in enhancing the energy efficiency of their properties. Earlier in the year, the Group introduced the first of a range of mortgage products that aim to help landlords in making their properties more energy efficient and improve their EPC rating, preparing them for the demands of legislation.