

CHEERS FOR 30 YEARS

JANE ATKINS • HEAD OF INTERMEDIARY SALES



This year marks a milestone that we're incredibly proud of – 30 years in business. That's three decades of helping people find a home, a whole generation of first-time buyers stepping onto the property ladder, families upsizing as they reach new stages of life, and customers settling into their forever homes. It's also been 30 years of supporting landlords – from those taking their very first step into property investment to those who have built thriving portfolios over time.



A lot can change in 30 years

When we opened our doors in 1996, the world looked very different. The housing market and mortgage landscape have both undergone profound change. Looking back, 1996 paints a vivid picture of just how far we've come. The average property price in England was just over £53,000¹. Today, that figure has increased dramatically, reaching around £273,000 according to the latest estimates, representing more than a fivefold rise in a generation².

Mortgage rates provide another interesting perspective on how the market has evolved. In the mid-90s, borrowers could typically expect rates of between 6.5% and 7%. While rates have fluctuated considerably over the past three decades, today's rates are not necessarily so far removed from those seen in 1996. However, with average house prices now more than five times higher, the financial commitments facing borrowers have changed significantly. Against this backdrop, the mortgage market has had to evolve, with a wider range of products, more flexible lending criteria, and increasingly sophisticated affordability assessments helping lenders respond to changing economic conditions and customer needs.

And it's not just housing that highlights the contrast. In 1996, the average annual salary was around £17,500. A loaf of bread cost 53p, and you could enjoy a pint of lager for £1.70. Oasis and the Spice Girls dominated the charts, mobile phones were a luxury rather than a necessity, and most mortgage applications were completed with paper forms and fax machines rather than online portals and digital signatures.



New technology, same focus on relationships

For brokers and lenders alike, relationships were built face-to-face or over the phone, often with far fewer tools at their disposal. Today, technology plays a central role in how we operate, helping to streamline processes, improve accessibility and enable faster decision-making. But while the tools have changed, the importance of human relationships hasn't diminished. If anything, it's become more vital as market complexity has increased.



Adapting to a changing customer

Over the past 30 years, we've also seen a significant shift in who we support. The traditional borrower profile has broadened considerably. Today, the rise of self-employment, the growth of the gig economy and the increasing use of limited company structures among landlords mean that many customers no longer fit neatly into standard lending criteria.

That's where specialist lending has come into its own. As a business, we've always prided ourselves on understanding the nuances of complex cases and finding ways to say "yes" where we can. We've adapted alongside the market to ensure we continue to meet the needs of modern borrowers.



Through the ups and downs

Of course, it hasn't always been plain sailing. Over three decades, we've navigated periods of significant economic uncertainty, from recessions and regulatory changes to the global financial crisis and, more recently, a pandemic that reshaped how we all live and work. Add today's uncertainty as a result of wider global pressures, and it's fair to say we've been through the ups, the downs and everything in between. Through it all, we've continued supporting brokers.

That resilience is something we're incredibly proud of. But it's not something we've achieved alone.

At the heart of our journey are the broker partners we have worked closely with every step of the way. For 30 years, they've trusted us with their clients, worked alongside us to find solutions and played a crucial role in helping us grow. Quite simply, we wouldn't be where we are today without them.

That's why we've always put brokers at the centre of everything we do. From the products we design to the service we provide, our focus has always been on making it easier for brokers to do business with us and, in turn, deliver the best possible outcomes for their clients.



Looking ahead to the next 30 years

As we celebrate this anniversary, it is a moment not only to reflect on how far we have come, but also to look ahead. The housing market will continue to evolve, customer needs will continue to change, and new challenges and opportunities will undoubtedly emerge. However, if the past 30 years have demonstrated anything, it is that adaptability, strong partnerships and a clear sense of purpose will continue to guide us.

While the landscape around us may shift, our core principles remain constant. We are committed to maintaining a disciplined, thoughtful approach to lending, while continuing to respond to the increasingly diverse and complex needs of today's borrowers. Just as importantly, we remain steadfast in our support for the intermediary community, whose expertise and insight are fundamental to delivering the right outcomes for customers.

By continuing to invest in our proposition and our relationships, we are well positioned to navigate whatever the next chapter brings.

¹ <https://landregistry.data.gov.uk/app/ukhpi/browse?from=1996-04-01&location=http%3A%2F%2Flandregistry.data.gov.uk%2Fid%2Fregion%2Fengland&to=2016-04-01&lang=en>

² <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/bulletins/private-rent-and-house-prices-uk/september-2026#:~:text=by%201.4%25%2C%20to-,%2C%A3273%2C000,-%2C%20in%20the%2012>

#KensingtonDifference



Keep up to date with our latest news and updates by following us on [LinkedIn](#)