

A year in review

2022

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Foreword

“ 2022 was a significant year for the Equity Release Council, and for the consumer safeguards we set, and champion. Not only did we celebrate the 30th anniversary of our standards, but we also introduced our fifth product standard – the right for consumers to make penalty free repayments. This important evolution reflects a decades-long commitment to robust consumer safeguards. Our standards have been key to building trust in equity release, and in 2023 will continue to give consumers confidence that equity release is a safe, and sustainable, modern financial planning tool. ”

David Burrowes
Chair



“ Our membership is the lifeblood of the Equity Release Council. We strive to demonstrate the value of that membership and to develop new added value services. Uniquely, we represent the whole of the value chain which gives us the mandate and credibility to talk with authority about the purpose, interests and potential of our important market. ”

We are proud of our achievements but not complacent. We are focused on moving the sector forward for the benefit of consumers and members.

Jim Boyd
Chief Executive Officer

Who we are



The **Equity Release Council** is the representative trade body for the UK equity release sector. In 2022, we celebrated the 30th anniversary of our standards, which were first launched by our predecessor Safe Home Income Plans. The Council has nearly 750 member firms and more than 1,800 individuals registered, including providers, funders, regulated financial advisers, solicitors, surveyors and other professionals.

It leads a consumer-focused UK based equity release market by setting authoritative standards and safeguards for the trusted provision of advice and products. Since 1991, over 610,000 homeowners have accessed almost £42bn of housing wealth via Council members to support their finances.

The Council also works with government, voluntary and public sectors, and regulatory, consumer and professional bodies to inform and influence debate about the use of housing wealth in later life and retirement planning.

“Seek reliable, regulated advice from a member of the Equity Release Council.”

Laura Whateley, Guardian, 12 November 2022



Our vision and mission

To continue to be the recognised voice of authority and the trusted consumer guardian on behalf of our members. We aim to achieve this through universal and transparent representation, progressive and dynamic stewardship, and wholehearted commitment to safeguarding.

Our year in review: highlights

In 2022, the Council:

<p>celebrated the 30th anniversary of our consumer safeguards, and we published our anniversary report.</p> 	<p>introduced a new safeguard – the right for consumers to make penalty free repayments. The first new product standard in 30 years.</p>	<p>delivered another successful Equity Release Summit.</p> 
<p>partnered with UKGlobal to offer reduced professional indemnity premiums to Council members.</p> 	<p>enhanced relationships with key regulatory and consumer-focused bodies.</p> 	<p>worked to provide guidance to members on the FCA's new Consumer Duty and have responded to issues surrounding vulnerability and the cost-of-living crisis.</p>
<p>improved our governance to ensure the Council reflects a membership organisation “best practice” model – and appointed two new Independent Non-Executive Directors</p>	<p>consulted with members to deliver an agreed Standards Committee structure.</p>	<p>launched new member-led forums – such as a Provider, Funder, Legal, Policy & Communications and Risk & Conduct forums.</p>
<p>achieved record media coverage with positive sentiment and appeared in consumer-facing media twice a day.</p>	<p>received third party brand endorsement from the likes of MoneySavingExpert, MoneyHelper and the Financial Ombudsman Service (FOS).</p>	<p>collaborated with the Scottish Government's Green Heat Finance Taskforce via our Funders Forum.</p> 

What we delivered: Consumer Safeguards

Standards evolution: Supporting the safe growth of the equity release market.

Once seen as a product of last resort, we have led on developing voluntary standards and consumer safeguards in the sale of equity release. Over time this has resulted in equity release being recognised as a sophisticated financial planning option with financial advisers, lawyers, and many household names joining the Council to grow the market.

These standards are widely credited with transforming the reputation of the industry, stimulating growth, and encouraging innovation.

In March 2022 we introduced our latest consumer safeguard – the first new product standard in 30 years: **The right for consumers to make penalty free repayments (subject to lender criteria).**

Our first five consumer safeguards are:

1

for lifetime mortgages the rate must be fixed for each release or, if variable, the rate must be capped for the life of the loan;

2

secure tenure for life or until you need to move into care;

3

the right to move home;

4

a no negative equity guarantee, which means the loan and interest can never exceed the value of the property; and

5

consumers have the right to independent legal advice.

For consumers, it means they can not only reduce their borrowing, but offset the interest, without making any ongoing commitment to further repayments.



Over
97%

strongly agree or agree the Council's protections and safeguards enable consumers to trust that equity release is safe and reliable.
from H1 member survey 2022

We facilitated the following working groups:

- Product Standards MI
- Post-completion communications
- Standard terms and definitions for fees and charges

We hosted 6 technical webinars to support member education.

We conducted oversight on our member firms.

We responded to over 300 technical queries.

We kept members in the loop (our regulatory 'digest').

We published the 10th version of our Standards and refreshed their look and feel.

Part A sets out the principles, customer outcomes and rules that must be followed by members of the Council. The document is in the public domain and available to consumers and policy makers. A second document, part B, provides guidance and good practice examples to support members. Part B is restricted to members only.



“The Equity Release Council, and its landmark consumer standards, are at the forefront of consumer protection. The Council and its dedicated staff deserve considerable credit for 30 years of work in helping everyone make the most of their money and pensions.”

Sir Hector Sants, Chair, Money and Pensions Service

What we delivered: Stakeholder Engagement

Speaking with one voice

Regulatory engagement

We have enhanced relationships with the regulatory bodies and regularly engage with key stakeholders at the FCA, MaPS, FOS, and FSCS on behalf of members.



Enhanced media profile

The Council is leading a broad conversation about property wealth, equity release and later life financial planning in the media. Nearly one in four articles featuring the Council includes the call to action to use a Council member or makes specific reference to our standards and protections.

“If you sign up for an Equity Release Council adviser (I recommend you do), the labyrinthine financial advice process, based around stringent principles, takes about six weeks. But it’s designed to protect you from making a bad decision and forces you to explore all available options.”

Moira O’Neill
Financial Times,
14 Oct 2022

“Only use advisers and providers who belong to the Equity Release Council, as this gives important guarantees, not least that the value of your loan can never exceed the value of your home.”

Paul Lewis Presenter,
BBC Radio 4 Moneybox,
13 Sep 2022

“Taking out an equity release mortgage is a big decision and not suitable for everyone. It is crucial to seek independent legal and financial advice from a member of the Equity Release Council first”.

Sarah Bridge
Deputy Money Editor,
Mail on Sunday,
1 Oct 2022

Political engagement

We work closely with politicians, advisers and officials in Westminster, Whitehall and Holyrood to ensure that they are briefed fully on modern equity release. Our aim is to produce the best possible operating environment for our members and ensure that any proposed legislative changes are to the benefit of both consumers and members alike.

- Production of a briefing paper including key industry “asks” for Ministers, MPs and Advisers
- Equity Release Reception at the House of Lords and planned House of Commons meetings.

Keeping our members informed:



Same day analysis of all major political announcements (Budget; King’s Speech; re-shuffles etc.)



Monthly parliamentary blog from the Chairman on all matters political.



Detailed monthly report of all political and regulatory developments.



In house expertise to advise on political relations and detailed Parliamentary procedure.



Working with members to help them build better relationships with their constituency MPs.

“I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Council for the work it has done in improving the standards of the equity release sector over the past 30 years. The sector has evolved greatly since the 1990s and I am truly appreciative of the integral role that the Council has played in its development. It has opened up new options and greater flexibility for people seeking to release money from their properties.”

Rt Hon John Glen MP, former Economic Secretary to the Treasury

What we delivered: Member Value

It is imperative that associations be wholly pragmatic in ensuring they add durable value to their members' professions, industries, and communities.



Annual Equity Release Summit 2022



The UK's flagship event for equity release professionals.

The Equity Release Summit is increasingly recognised as a landmark event in the later life lending calendar – growing in impact, recognition, profile, and credibility.

The one-day Summit, held in the heart of Westminster, continues to be the platform to showcase the positive role that equity release, and property wealth, can play within the wider financial services sector.

Attracting over 300 attendees, the Summit brings together

key influencers (ranging from senior journalists, ministers, MPs, regulators, civil servants, peers, and consumer champions) alongside industry professionals and Council members, representing the full equity release value chain.

Key themes in 2022:

- Green Equity Release
- Intergenerational Gifting
- Future of Equity Release
- Industry breakouts designed to enhance knowledge, business success and positive consumer outcomes



Engaging with the leadership of the Equity Release sector and providing opportunities for networking – launched a programme of leaders' lunches.



Membership induction webinars – we host quarterly induction webinars for our constantly growing membership community to ensure they get the most out of membership.



Providing a platform for member voice and influence via member-led forums and working groups.



Partnered with UKGlobal to introduce a PI scheme for members – enabling some to benefit from reduced PI premiums – with a panel of insurers that recognise the value of our standards in promoting best practice and reducing risk.

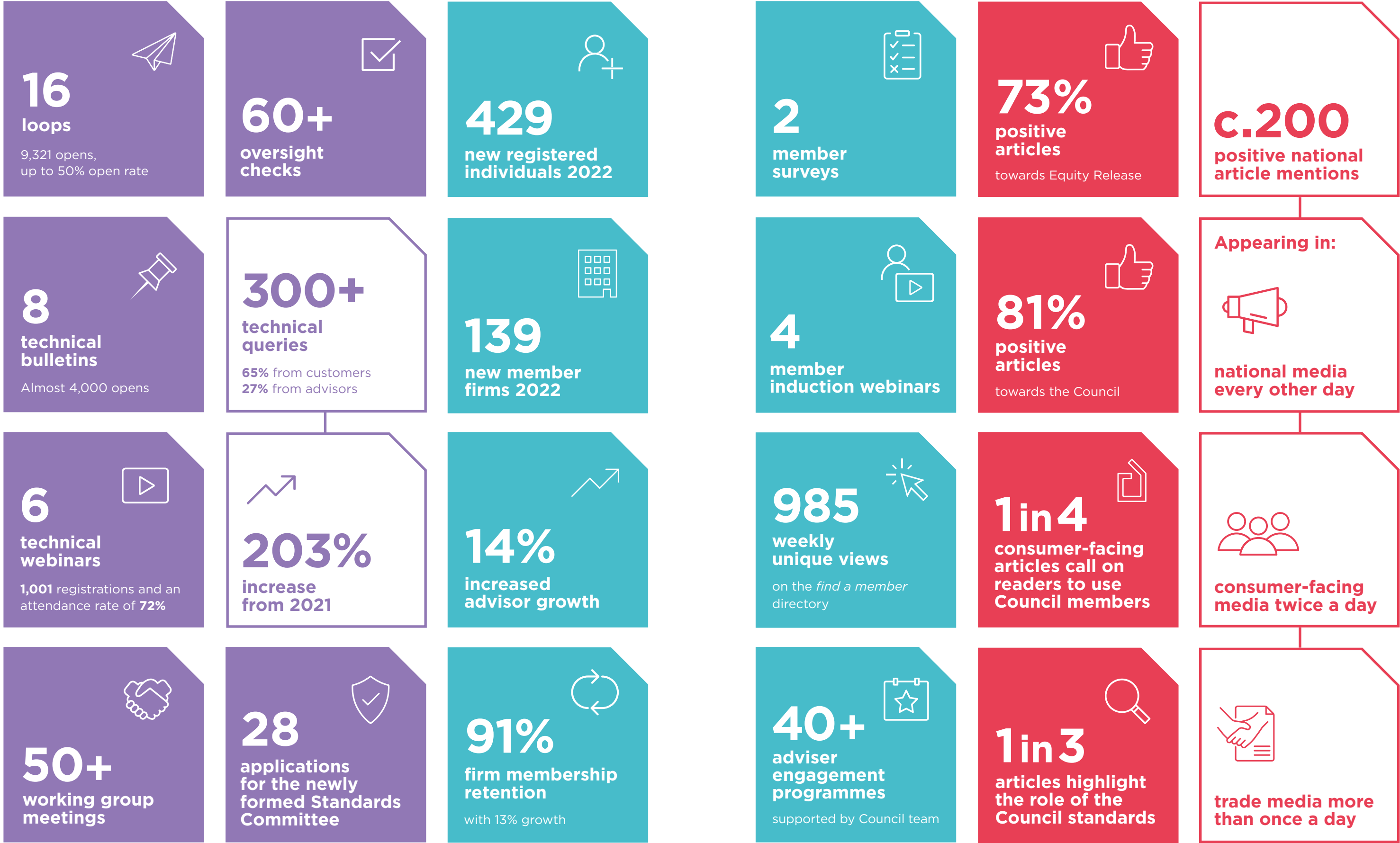


Council staff have supported over 40 adviser engagement programmes with member firms such as Sense network, New Leaf, PRIMIS, AiR and L&G Home Finance throughout 2022.

“I would recommend any firm working in the equity release sector to apply for membership of the Council. Membership gives a clear signal to consumers that the firm is committed to safeguarding customers' interests, crucial to maintaining public confidence in our sector. It also brings members the benefits of shared expertise and a strong voice ensuring our views are heard by decision makers beyond our industry. Just has been a proud member of the Equity Release Council since it was founded and we feel any organisation should consider membership as an essential part of doing business in our sector.”

Paul Turner, Managing Director, Retail, Just Group, and first Chair of our Providers Forum

Our year in numbers



Our plans for the next 12 months

Enriching connectivity and collaboration across the membership

As part of the Council's commitment to supporting good outcomes in later life lending; including members' professional development, we will continue to deliver a multifaceted engagement programme in 2023. Designed to inform and enhance knowledge of key sector issues, including regulatory and emerging market trends – while providing valuable opportunities for members to connect and network.

- Deliver** the landmark equity release event – the Equity Release Summit on 16th May 2023
- Develop** and deliver a new adviser-focussed conference in Manchester on 8th November 2023
- Provide** a platform for member voice and influence – execution of the enhanced governance structure and associated forums, panels and committees
- Build** a community network structure to support regional engagement
- Build** a regional meeting programme
- Engage** with the leadership of the Equity Release sector – continue series of leadership lunches
- Deliver** Consumer Duty support – guidance paper and webinars on fair value assessments
- Launch** the Legal Competency Framework and supporting resources
- Suspend** our proposed membership fee increase for 2023, supporting members in challenging times
- Work** on a strategy to move the sector further forward for the benefit of consumers, and members.

Our people

Meet the Board



David Burrowes
Chair of the Equity Release Council



Mike Hughes
Independent Non-Executive Director



Barry Meeks
Independent Non-Executive Director



Vanessa Owen
*Board Director**



Tom Evans
*Board Director**



Claire Barker
*Board Director**

**transitioning from Board to new governance model*

Meet the Team



Jim Boyd
Chief Executive Officer



Donna Francis
Chief Operating Officer



Simon Posner
Public Affairs Consultant



Kelly Melville-Kelly
Head of Risk, Policy and Compliance



Sue Read
Risk, Policy and Compliance Manager



Sarah Hall
Administration and Service Manager



Chris Fay
Communications Manager



Laura Gibson
Membership Business Development Manager



Allyson McAlister
Communications Officer



Jennifer Logue
Executive Personal Assistant and Admin Support



Laura Hall
Administration Assistant

Thank you

We would like to acknowledge the energy and enthusiasm of the following individuals who have dedicated their time, skills, and expertise in supporting delivery of the Council's mission, vision and objectives. As well as the many volunteers who have supported the Council's working groups and forums in 2022.

Main Board

- Paul Barber
- Paul Carter
- Will Hale
- Dave Harris

- Matt McGill
- Paul Turner
- Matt Burton
- Claire Singleton
- Dan Baines
- Chris Pond

Standards Board

- Chris Pond (Chair)
- Liz Barclay
- Jim Dredge
- Elizabeth Murley

- Graham Evans
- Stuart Wilson
- James Ginley

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