



Mortgage & Protection news

The newsletter from Fortis Mortgage Brokers



Be in CONTROL...

Is it time to start implementing your property (and protection) plans?

» Following the Financial Crash of 2007/8, many of us had to tighten our belts and hold back from implementing plans, such as house moves, or undertaking major renovations to our existing home. Yet, over time we had to get on with our lives. Similarly, as Brexit drags on, consumer reluctance to implement planned lifestyle changes may also soften. In which case you may, for example, want to take advantage of the **excellent mortgage deals** on offer.

Where we can help

Whilst strict lending requirements remain in place, we operate in this sector day-in day-out, and have an excellent understanding of what different lenders are looking for.

This will, hopefully, help us to swiftly identify the most suitable route forward for you, whether that's for a **house move**, **improving your current home**, or buying your **first property**.

Or maybe it's to help purchase a **second home**, or to **expand your portfolio** in your role as a landlord.

Alternatively, you may be coming towards the end of your current 'deal period' and want to **remortgage** onto another one. Or perhaps you simply want to identify a better

mortgage deal than the one you have.

Whatever your reasons, it can be a confusing process with so many different mortgage products out there, so it probably comes as no surprise that most seek advice. Research shows that 85% of all mortgages from those lenders surveyed are going through intermediaries (such as us).

(Source: iress, 2018 Mortgage Efficiency Survey, October 2018)

Interestingly, the increase in competition amongst lenders has meant that over the last decade, the average two and five-year **mortgage rates have more than halved!**

(Source: Moneyfacts, August 2019 release)

Elsewhere, current UK property prices will also be a consideration. Annual growth remains subdued at 0.6% - albeit regional variations would apply.

(Source: Nationwide, year to August 2019)

Furthermore, you must also recognise the importance of protecting you (and your income stream), by taking out suitable

protection insurance cover. Similar to what's on offer with mortgages, there's a wide, and innovative range of protection options to consider.

Mortgage Prisoners

With regard to this specific audience, there continues to be movement politically, and also via regulators and trade bodies, to get lenders to assist the **150,000** or so who are viewed as mortgage prisoners. These borrowers are **stuck on their Standard Variable Rate**, as they can't meet the strict affordability criteria to get a better deal, or find themselves with lenders who no longer lend.

Those that face this scenario ought to talk to us, as options may be improving. Alternatively, get in touch if any of the earlier issues resonate.

You may have to pay an early repayment charge to your existing lender if you remortgage.

■ Your home or property may be repossessed if you do not keep up repayments on your mortgage.

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Welcome....

to this newsletter, which covers what we believe are some of the key issues of the moment that affect mortgage, protection and insurance products - and sets out how we **may help you.**

■ Fortis Mortgage Brokers is a trading name of Graham Gibson who is an appointed representative of Openwork Limited, which is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.



Lofty Ambitions

As said, many of you may feel that you've waited long enough for some resolution to Brexit - either way - and simply want to proceed with long-planned **Home Improvements**.

» For many, improving your home is a balancing act. First, to identify and cost out what works best for you, and your family, and then how that may play out in adding value to any future property sale.

Build up, out or down

Adding extra space to your home tends to be the most financially lucrative - whether that's building upwards, with a loft conversion, adding an extension, installing a basement, or converting the garage.

According to the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS), for example, more than a million homes in the UK now have loft conversions, with the market growing by an estimated 10% each year. Estate agents calculate that **an average loft conversion costs around a third of the**

price of moving to a property with an extra room. In fact, turning your attic into usable space could increase the value of your home by as much as 25%, particularly if you are adding an extra bedroom and a bathroom. *(Source: RICS, Guide to Home Extensions)*

If you're looking to build outwards with an extension, then the temporary rules that allow homeowners in England to do this without seeking planning permission have now been made permanent. It encompasses building a single-storey rear extension on their property of up to 6m for terraced and semi-detached homes, or 8m for detached homes. Although, neighbours will still be consulted and can raise objections.

Within the existing structure, some may want to modernise the kitchen - a focal point for many homes - and take advantage

of the increasingly innovative storage and appliance solutions.

Consider the basics

Before you embark on obvious pleasing developments, consider any structural problems, such as a leaking roof, or that the electrical system is sound, and get them sorted first, as it would be a lot more disruptive if that's done after the event.

But remember, no matter how much you spend there is likely to be a ceiling value that's partly framed by local property prices.

Getting the funds

Depending on the amount you require, the two obvious routes are remortgaging to secure a larger loan amount, or seeking an additional loan, such as a second charge on your property. You may opt for the latter if you face a hefty early repayment charge on your existing mortgage deal.

Conversely, if you feel you'd struggle to raise more funds, then assess your current deal. If you're on your lender's Standard Variable Rate, then the savings each month from seeking out a better deal, may go some way towards helping to cover the costs of the smaller jobs around your home.

If you are keen to raise funds to implement your plans, do get in touch.

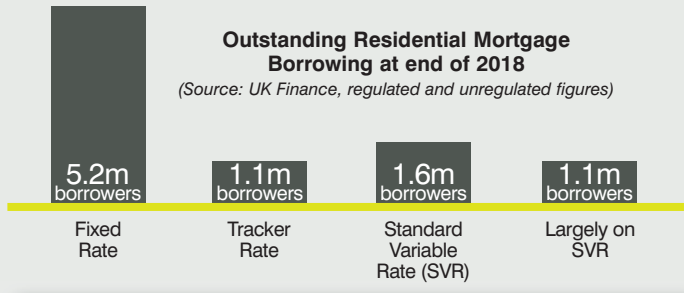
■ **Your home may be repossessed if you do not keep up repayments on your mortgage.**

FACTS about... Residential Borrowers

Fixed Rate deals continue to be the most popular form of borrowing, with the 5.2m borrowers accounting for almost 58% of the marketplace in 2018, up from around 52% in 2017. *(Source: UK Finance, 2017 & 2018 data)*

» The next largest grouping, are those sitting on far more expensive Standard Variable Rates (SVR). To put that into perspective, the average rate for a 2-year fixed deal is 2.49%, with the average SVR at about twice that amount at 4.90%. In which case, if you're on an SVR, it's possibly worth having a discussion. *(Source: Moneyfacts, July 2019 analysis)*

In the other chart, you'll see the differences between those that are simply staying put and remortgaging vs. those that are moving home or are first-time buyers. Interestingly, as a reflection of the changing times we live in, the average age for the first-time buyer has risen over the years, and currently stands as high as 32.



AVERAGE FINDINGS	REMORTGAGORS	HOME MOVERS	FIRST-TIME BUYERS
Property Price	£311,458	£333,465	£223,873
Loan-to-Value	57.6%	67.7%	76.9%
Loan Size	£179,400	£225,756	£172,158
As an Income Multiple	2.74	3.28	3.51
% of Monthly Gross Household Income (to service capital & interest repayments)	16.3%	17.3%	16.9%
Age	42	40	32

(Source: UK Finance, June 2019 figures for type of borrower, released August 2019)



Family PROTECTION

You may feel that once you've got your mortgage loan it's job done - but what about protecting the income stream(s) that will pay the mortgage, along with all the other family living costs?

» Many of us recognise the importance of insuring our homes, mobiles and pets. Yet do we apply as much importance to protecting the wage earner(s) who fund the above costs and much more? Whilst many may feel that an untimely death, serious health issue, or a major injury are highly unlikely, or way off into the future - do take a look at the box on the right, as you'll see that it's possibly more likely, and earlier in life than you think.

Surely it's better to **have some protection insurance cover in place and not need it, than to really need it and not have it!**

What's best for you?

There are three main areas to consider, and within these, a massive array of options to suit your age, lifestage, and pocket:

- **Life Cover** - this pays out a lump sum when you die, or a regular income in the case of Family Income Benefit.
- **Critical Illness Cover** - this pays out a lump sum when you are diagnosed with a specified critical illness.
- **Income Protection** - this pays you a percentage of your monthly income when you can't work due to illness or injury.

My Employer will support me

This may, or may not, be true, so do check what's on offer - as there's no point duplicating your cover. If, for example, you are off work long-term, due to illness or injury, and there's only support provided at the basic level, then it's Statutory Sick Pay, which is just £94.25 a week, paid for up to 28 weeks if you qualify. This is less than one-fifth of the average weekly wage of around £500*, which could leave a big shortfall in a person's finances.

Separately, if you are part of the 4.9m workers that are self-employed*, then your exposure is probably even more pronounced! *(Source: *Office for National Statistics, UK Labour Market, May 2019 release)*

Added value benefits

The insurance industry recognises that a payout upon claiming may be the initial driver in setting up a policy. But it's also aware that there is a real benefit - for both the insured and the insurer - if a relationship is maintained throughout the policy term, as reflected by the following examples:

- Incentives to keep healthy - including discounts off health club membership, and wearable technology to aid fitness.

■ Specialist support - such as GP/nurse helplines, telephone counselling, carer support services, consumer rights, early intervention and rehabilitation services.

Costs and payout likelihood

With such a wide range of options on offer, do talk to us, as you may be pleasantly surprised at how little a plan may cost. As for paying out claims, take a look at the positive figures at the bottom of this page.

As with all insurance policies, terms, conditions and exclusions will apply.

Could it happen to ME?

Leaving loved ones behind to pick up the pieces.

■ **One in eight of all current healthy 35-year-olds will die before the age of 65.** *(Source: Drewberry, Protection Survey 2018)*

As worrying as the above figure may be, it's probably more likely that someone would suffer and survive a serious illness, long-term ill-health, or injury across the same period. If so, that would impact upon the regular income stream, whilst the wage earner recovers.

■ **A sizeable 2 million individuals are currently off work and deemed as long-term sick.** *(Source: Office for National Statistics, UK Labour Market, May 2019 release)*

■ **Going back 40 years or so, just 1 in 4 people survived their cancer disease for 10 years or more, nowadays it's doubled to 1 in 2.**

(Source: Cancer Research UK, April 2019)

■ **Since 1961, the UK death rate from heart and circulatory diseases has declined by more than three-quarters.**

(Source: British Heart Foundation, Nov. 2018)

A massive 97.6% of all Protection Claims are met

- equating to a sizeable **£14.5m a day** in payouts, and how that plays out for the key sectors are as follows:

LIFE COVER

- 99.4% of all Life claims
- Average payout of: £81,269 (term) £4,740 (whole of life)

CRITICAL ILLNESS

- 91.6% of all Critical Illness claims
- Average payout of £70,926

INCOME PROTECTION

- 88.1% of all Income Protection claims
- Average payout of £22,058

(Source: Association of British Insurers, 2018 data, May 2019 release)



With a wide range of product choices and a requirement to meet the strict borrowing criteria, the mortgage process can be confusing for **First-Time Buyers** - so it makes sense to take advice.

Onto the **Property Ladder**

» To own your own home remains a desire of many who are currently renting, or living at home. If you (or your children) find yourself in this situation, then you can take comfort from the continued support that exists.

The government, for example, wants to get more people onto the property ladder through initiatives such as the **Help-to-Buy** scheme. It's also keen to encourage new housebuilding - for which the first-time buyer is a key audience. In fact, in 2018, housebuilders applied for permission to build 370,000 new homes, double the number from a decade earlier.

(Source: Home Builders Federation/Glenigan, Housing Pipeline report, May 2019 release)

The Deposit

Providing a deposit is a key stumbling block for many, but in this respect there's much improved lender support with products that only require a **5% deposit**. Going back a decade, there were just five mortgage lenders who offered a product with a 5% deposit. By August 2019, there were 59 providers to choose from!

As for the deal rates, whilst they will not be as attractive as those where a much larger deposit is provided, the average two and five-year fixed rate deals for a 95% Loan-to-Value (LTV) mortgage were 3.24% and 3.63%, respectively.

(Source: Moneyfacts, August 2019 analysis)

CREDIT RATING

- This may not have been an issue for you previously, but it's an important factor when seeking a mortgage loan.
- The role of a credit score is to try to predict your future behaviour, which means that people who have a poor score may suffer.
- We can talk through the steps you could take to help improve your rating, and to make yourself more appealing to the lenders.
- Surprisingly though, rental payment history (particularly for those not in social housing) isn't necessarily reflected in people's credit reports. However, there now seems to be greater enthusiasm from the credit agencies and from those that use their service to include this information. This is likely to benefit some first-time buyers.

Additionally, if you have just a 5% deposit, then consider the Help-to-Buy scheme for new-build properties, where the government would loan an extra percentage enabling you to access the better LTV deals on offer.

As the average LTV figure for first-time buyers sits at around 77% (comparable to a 23% deposit) many have already taken advantage of this scheme, benefitted from the Bank of Mum & Dad, or simply saved for a larger deposit.

(Source: UK Finance, June 2019 figures, August 2019 release)

Positive climate

House price growth (or decline) will vary wherever you are in the UK, but in general, growth is slowing. **Stalling house prices**, combined with relatively **cheap borrowing**, and **lower deposit** requirements, may usher in a period of opportunity for those looking to make their first property purchase.

Additionally, don't forget that the first-time buyer is also a very attractive proposition for sellers, as there's no property chain behind them, creating one less hurdle in the homebuying process.

Our support

It's vital that you **take professional advice**. We would help navigate you through the affordability, evidencing of income and credit rating hoops, and in the process hopefully identify some of the decent deals that are still on offer - whether it's a 95% LTV package, or moving towards the 60%+ LTV deals, where the interest rate reduces to reflect the larger deposit contribution.

Please talk to us to see if we can help you (or a family member) step onto the property-owning ladder.

■ **Your home may be repossessed if you do not keep up repayments on your mortgage.**

■ The contents of this newsletter are believed to be correct at the date of publication (September 2019).

■ Every care is taken that the information in the *Mortgage & Protection News* publication is accurate at the time of going to press. However, all information and figures are subject to change and you should always make enquiries and check details and, where necessary, seek legal advice before entering into any transaction.

■ The information in this newsletter is of a general nature. You should seek professional advice tailored to your needs and circumstances before making any decisions.

■ **We do hope that the newsletter is of interest to you, however, please inform us if you no longer wish to receive it.**