

# Mortgage & Protection news

The newsletter from Merewood Financial Services

## MEREWOOD

### Financial Services

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



# Be in CONTROL...

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, with 85% of all mortgages going through intermediaries (such as us).

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

Interestingly, the increase in competition amongst lenders has meant that a decade on from the financial crisis, average **mortgage rates have almost halved!**

*(Source: Moneyfacts, March 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 May 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.**

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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**.

■ Merewood Financial Services is a trading style of David Tarry, who is an Appointed Representative of The Right Mortgage Limited, which is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

■ There may be a fee for mortgage advice. The precise amount will depend upon your circumstances, but typically this will be £499.

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



# 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.**

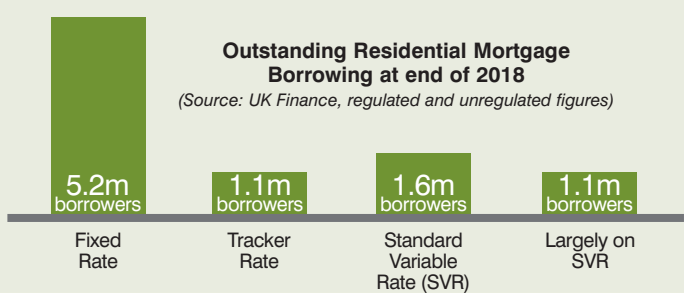
■ **Your home may be repossessed if you do not keep up repayments on your mortgage.**

# 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 around 2.49%, with the average SVR at about twice that amount at 4.89%. In which case, if you're on an SVR, it's possibly worth having a discussion. *(Source: Moneyfacts, March 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	£305,896	£325,224	£215,062
Loan-to-Value	56.9%	67.1%	76.1%
Loan Size	£174,055	£218,225	£163,662
As an Income Multiple	2.71	3.28	3.45
% of Monthly Gross Household Income (to service capital & interest repayments)	16.5%	17.4%	16.9%
Age	42	40	32

*(Source: UK Finance, March 2019 figures for type of borrower, released May 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 have a specified serious 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)*

# COST Control

Whilst you may recognise the benefits that **Protection insurance cover** could deliver for you and your family, we fully understand that there are likely to be many demands on your income stream. If cost is an issue, then do consider these two products that may better suit your pocket.

## FAMILY INCOME BENEFIT

General life cover that pays out a lump sum (if a valid claim is made) is often in place to help settle the outstanding mortgage. That's a great help, but for the partner left behind and their children, what about ongoing everyday items such as food, clothes, utility bills, childcare, or other expenses like holidays and university costs?

This is where a **Family Income Benefit plan** could deliver much-needed support. In the event of death, it would provide a regular tax-free income for your loved ones from the time of the claim to the end of the plan term.

It's often taken out over a 10 to 20-year term, or whatever may be appropriate in your circumstances. The idea is that should you have a valid claim, then it's in place to **pay out until the children have grown up**.

It is generally viewed as a good value plan. This is because the potential 'total' payout over time decreases the further through the policy you get, which is reflected in a lower premium cost.

## How it works

If you took out, for example, a 20-year term, which was set up to pay out £20,000/year and it was claimed against after one year, then the family would receive £20,000/year for the next 19 years, equating to a total payout of £380,000 (if no index-linking).

However, if for the same plan, there wasn't a claim until 18 years into the policy term, the total payout would be just £40,000. If, fortunately, there was no claim at all within the 20-year period, then the policy simply runs the whole term without any payout.

## SHORTER-TERM INCOME PROTECTION

Income Protection is designed to pay out a tax-free monthly sum in the event that you can't work due to illness or injury. With mid-40s being the average initial age to claim, it could run right up until you retire. However, if you're concerned about minimising your outlay, then a **shorter-term version** is also available, which could still deliver important financial support (if still off work) for generally up to two years - even five, in some instances.

Analysis by Zurich, an insurer, set out that this type of Income Protection cover for a 35-year-old professional earning the average salary of £27,000, and wanting to protect 50% of their

## Finding the extra pounds...

Putting aside the money to fund a Protection plan may be easier than you think when you consider all those little items we may take for granted, like the odd drink or a magazine. Whilst we don't expect you to give up all of life's little luxuries, if you cut out just one unit each week of the items below, then you could save around £150 across a month. In many cases, that'll be more than you need to cover the cost of a protection policy.

Treats	£ Cost/unit (est.)
Soft drink	1.00
Snack	1.00
Magazine	1.50
Coffee (takeaway)	2.50
Pint of beer or lager	3.50
Glass of wine (175ml)	3.50
Taxi	5.00
Cigarettes (pack of 20)	10.00
Takeaway meal	7.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>= £35.00</b>

net income may only cost the equivalent of **one takeaway coffee a week** across the course of each month, for up to two years cover. (Source: Zurich, *Cost of Resilience report, August 2018*)

**Please do get in touch to hear more.**

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

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**There may be a fee for mortgage advice. The precise amount will depend upon your circumstances, but typically this will be £499.**

- The contents of this newsletter are believed to be correct at the date of publication (June 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.