



September 2025

Your End-of-Summer Home Reset

The Value of Using an Adviser When It Comes to Your Remortgage

An adviser will navigate the market on your behalf and ensure your mortgage continues to work for you.

Unlocking Home Equity: Without Losing Your Low Rate

Avoiding common pitfalls like overlooking early-repayment charges or taking on unaffordable debt.

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Featured **This Month**

As summer fades, a little preparation goes a long way. This month we cover quick wins to refresh your home, simple upgrades to boost efficiency, and heading into autumn feeling organised.

We also look at unlocking equity, the value of expert advice, and what's ahead for buy-to-let.

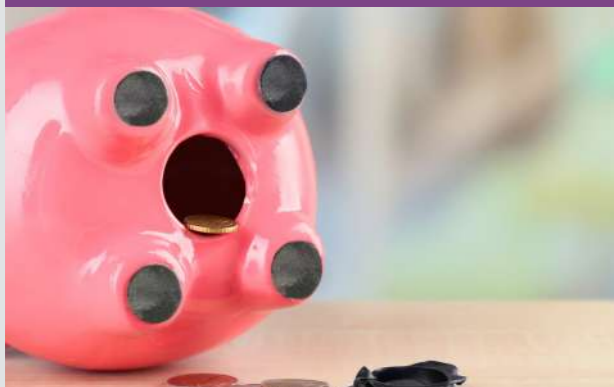
Working **With Us**

Welcome to our monthly newsletter! With over 30 years' experience in mortgages and protection, we offer whole-of-market guidance to help you make confident financial decisions. Our personalised advice and ongoing support are here to ease your stress and keep you informed as your needs evolve.

If you have any queries, please don't hesitate to contact us.

Unlocking Home Equity Without Losing Your Low Rate

Need funds for projects or family support? **Explore ways to tap into home equity** without remortgaging to a higher rate.



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Your End-of-Summer Home Reset

September is here and now's a great time to give your home a once-over before the cooler months creep in. After a particularly hot summer, a bit of light prep can make a big difference!

Here are a few things worth ticking off:

1. Clear gutters and check the roof

Dry weather means now's the perfect time to get up (or get someone up) to clear out leaves and debris. While you're there, look for cracked tiles or loose flashing.

2. Trim back trees and hedges

Overgrown branches can block light and trap moisture against your walls, not ideal when things turn damp. A tidy garden also helps once leaves start falling.

3. Check smoke alarms and detectors

Easy to forget, but just as easy to sort. Test the alarms, change the batteries, and make sure everything's in good shape.

4. Tackle minor maintenance

Things like squeaky doors, chipped paint, or worn seals around windows; the little bits you meant to sort but didn't.

A quick round of small fixes can go a long way in making your home feel ready for the season ahead.

5. Give appliances a quick once-over

It's not glamorous, but pulling out your fridge or freezer to give it a clean (and a de-ice if it needs it) helps it run better and use less energy. Same goes for extractor fans and oven filters!

6. Do a seasonal refresh

If you're feeling ambitious, go for a bit of a deep clean - under the sofa, behind the appliances, freshen up soft furnishings.

Simple but satisfying

You don't need to spend a fortune or a full weekend, even ticking off a couple of these jobs will make your home feel fresher, warmer and more in control. *Thinking of home updates this autumn? Let's chat about your options.*



The Value of Using an Adviser When It Comes to Your Remortgage

Remortgaging is on the rise. At the end of 2024, UK Finance forecasted that external remortgaging would jump 30 % in 2025 to £76 billion while product transfers within the same lender are expected to grow by 13 %^[1].

Recently, the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) removed the rule that forced lenders to signpost borrowers for advice when they sought information about changing their mortgage^[2]. This policy change is intended to reduce red tape, but it also raises a pressing question: *should you handle your remortgage alone or work with a professional adviser?*

What Has Changed?

Under the Mortgage Rule Review published on 22nd July 2025, lenders no longer have to direct customers to seek advice during an interactive mortgage discussion. Borrowers can now ask lenders questions or discuss options without automatically triggering a formal advice process. Full affordability checks have also been simplified: if a new mortgage is more affordable than your current one or is available through your existing lender, a full affordability assessment isn't required. The FCA emphasises that these rules are voluntary; lenders are free to decide whether to adopt them, and the regulator expects that borrowers will still seek advice. Industry reaction has been mixed, with UK Finance welcoming the reforms as reducing regulatory "friction" and improving customer choice^[3]. However, some experts voiced concern that vulnerable borrowers might make complex decisions without guidance.

Why Advice Still Matters

Even with simplified rules, remortgaging is a complex decision. Advisers bring several advantages:

- **Whole-of-market access:** Advisers can compare products from multiple lenders, including deals not available to consumers directly. Meaning that a broker has access to deals you can't get by going straight to a lender. This breadth of choice matters when rates and product terms vary widely.
- **Expert analysis:** A broker will analyse your financial situation, including outstanding balances, early-repayment charges and

your credit profile, to determine whether switching makes sense. They help you weigh arrangement fees against potential savings and assess whether a shorter or longer fixed period aligns with your goals.

- **Tailored strategy:** An adviser considers your wider financial plan. For example, if you anticipate moving or need to borrow more to fund home improvements, they can recommend flexible products or second-charge loans. They can also ensure that protection needs (life insurance, income protection) are addressed as part of a holistic mortgage review.
- **Time savings and administrative support:** Remortgage applications involve paperwork and lender queries. Advisers can manage this process, reducing the risk of delays or mistakes. They also track market movements and can switch you to a better deal if rates improve before completion.

The Risks of Going It Alone

While execution-only remortgages are allowed, they come with pitfalls:

- **Limited product range:** A single lender can only offer its own products. You might miss out on lower rates or features such as free legal fees, flexible overpayment options or cashback.
- **Unseen costs:** Borrowers focused on headline rates may overlook higher arrangement fees, early-repayment charges or exit penalties.
- **Suitability:** Without advice, it's easy to choose a mortgage that fits your current budget but fails to support your longer-term goals. For example, opting for a 40-year term may cut monthly payments but could push debt into retirement.
- **Complex criteria:** Self-employed borrowers, those with multiple income streams or credit issues may struggle to navigate lender criteria and underwriting processes.

Real-World Example

Consider Sarah and Tom, whose five-year fix at 1.9 % ends in October. They still owe £220 000 on their home valued at £400 000. Their lender offers a two-year fix at 4.3 % with no fee. However, a broker finds a different lender offering 4.1 % with a £999 fee but also free valuation and legal costs. Over two years the lower rate saves them £1 760 in interest – more than the fee. The broker also arranges a second-charge loan to fund a loft conversion, enabling them to keep their existing low-rate mortgage intact. Without advice, Sarah and Tom might have stayed with their lender and paid more overall.

Consumer Duty and Good Outcomes

Consumer Duty requires firms to deliver good outcomes for customers. Lenders can meet this by ensuring borrowers understand the options and consequences. As part of good practice, lenders must still identify when a customer would benefit from advice and signpost them accordingly. Brokers and advisers play a pivotal role in helping clients make informed choices, particularly when affordability tests and product structures become more flexible.

The FCA's removal of the advice trigger creates more freedom and convenience for borrowers,

but it doesn't lessen the complexity of mortgage decisions. With more remortgage activity expected, securing professional advice ensures you obtain the best deal for your circumstances and avoid costly mistakes. An adviser will consider your entire financial picture, navigate the market on your behalf and ensure your mortgage continues to work for you over the long term.

Source Data:

[1] **Financial Reporter** – Mortgage lending to grow by 11% in 2025: UK Finance

[2] **Mortgage Solutions** – FCA removes advice trigger for mortgages and eases some affordability requirements

[3] **Mortgage Solutions** – Industry welcomes FCA move to reduce 'regulatory friction'

Your home may be repossessed if you do not keep up repayments on your mortgage or any other loan secured on it.

This article is for information purposes and should not be taken as financial advice. Always seek professional advice tailored to your circumstances.



Green Upgrades on a Budget:

Achieving EPC C Without Breaking the Bank

Energy efficiency is no longer a niche concern, it's a legal requirement on the horizon.

The UK government plans to raise the minimum Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating for privately rented homes from E to C for new tenancies by 2028 and for all tenancies by 2030^[1]. Upgrading early not only spreads costs but also improves marketability, as lenders and tenants increasingly favour efficient properties.

Why Upgrade?

Energy-inefficient homes waste money and pollute more. Moving a property from EPC D to C could save tenants about £499 per year in utility bills. Yet many landlords underestimate the cost: a survey found 34 % expect to spend between £1 000 and £10 000 to reach EPC C^[1].

Government Plans and New EPC Metrics

The government is reforming the EPC system and plans to introduce metrics for fabric performance, heating-system efficiency and smart readiness by 2026^[2]. Landlords will need to meet a primary standard based on fabric performance and a secondary metric of their choice (heating system or smart readiness). The forthcoming rules should incentivise deep retrofits rather than quick fixes.

Low-Cost Improvements

You can make significant gains without major renovations:

- **Draught-proofing:** Seal gaps around doors, windows and floorboards.
- **LED lighting:** Replace halogen bulbs; LEDs use 80 % less energy and last longer.
- **Smart thermostats and radiator valves:** Installing a smart thermostat and thermostatic radiator valves improves heating control and could cut energy use by 5–10 %.

- **Loft insulation top-up:** Many homes already have some loft insulation; topping up to the recommended depth offers one of the best cost-to-benefit ratios.

Mid-Range Upgrades

For bigger leaps in efficiency, consider:

- **Cavity wall insulation:** Suitable for properties built after the 1920s with unfilled cavities; costs depend on size but can reduce heat loss significantly.
- **Solid wall insulation:** For older homes without cavities; internal or external insulation yields significant gains.
- **Energy-efficient boilers and heat pumps:** Replacing an old gas boiler with a modern condensing model improves your EPC rating; air-source heat pumps may be eligible for grants under the Boiler Upgrade Scheme.
- **Double or triple glazing:** Reduces heat loss and noise but comes at a higher cost.

Finance and Incentives

Green finance can offset upfront costs:

- **Green mortgages and cashbacks:** Lenders increasingly offer preferential rates or cashback for properties with EPC A–C ratings or for improvements.
- **Government schemes:** Grants such as the Energy Company Obligation (ECO4) and the Boiler Upgrade Scheme can help finance insulation and heat pumps.
- **Local authority grants:** Some councils offer loans or vouchers for energy efficiency measures.

Step-by-Step Plan

1. **Get an EPC assessment:** Commission a qualified assessor to understand your home's current rating and recommended measures.
2. **Prioritise fabric first:** Start with insulation and draught-proofing.
3. **Plan upgrades over time:** Spread costs by tackling measures in stages; begin with low-cost fixes, then move to larger projects.
4. **Seek financing:** Speak to your mortgage broker about green mortgage deals and grants.
5. **Keep records:** Maintain receipts and certificates for upgrades to demonstrate compliance and support resale value.

Futureproof Your Property

If you're a landlord, upgrading now minimises the risk of void periods when the 2028/2030 deadlines arrive. For homeowners, energy efficiency not only reduces bills but also increases comfort and property value. Research shows buyers increasingly consider EPC ratings when making offers.

Achieving EPC C doesn't have to be an expensive overhaul. By understanding the upcoming rules, prioritising cost-effective measures and leveraging green finance, homeowners and landlords can upgrade their properties in stages. Starting now spreads the cost, enhances comfort, appeals to tenants and buyers, and may unlock lower mortgage rates.

Source Data:

[1]Simply Business – New energy efficiency rules for rental properties: what landlords need to know

[2]UK Government / Committee on Fuel Poverty – Improving the energy performance of privately rented homes: 2025 update

Your home may be repossessed if you do not keep up repayments on your mortgage or any other loan secured on it.



Unlocking Home Equity Without Losing Your Low Rate

Need funds for projects or family support? Explore ways to tap into home equity without remortgaging to a higher rate

In the early 2020s, borrowers were locking into fixed-rate mortgages below 3 %, taking advantage of historically low rates. Fast forward to 2025 and those rates look like bargains as new fixed deals hover around 4–5 %. Many homeowners now find themselves “property rich but cash poor”: they need funds for renovations, education fees or helping family members, yet they don’t want to relinquish their low mortgage rate. Fortunately, there are options to access your home’s equity without remortgaging into a higher rate.

Option 1: Second-Charge Mortgages

A second-charge mortgage (also known as a secured loan) allows you to borrow against the equity in your home while keeping your existing first mortgage unchanged. Second charges can be useful for funding larger home improvements or consolidating debts. Advantages include the ability to avoid disturbing your existing mortgage and flexibility in how you repay the additional borrowing. Borrowers with weakened credit or a reduced affordability score may still qualify for second-charge loans, although interest rates are typically higher and you’ll need to manage two separate loans.

Option 2: Further Advance

You can ask your current lender for a further advance, which adds to your existing mortgage.

This may be cheaper than a second charge, but rates can vary and you might be offered terms less favourable than your current deal. A further advance increases your loan-to-value (LTV) ratio and may affect your eligibility for future remortgages.

Option 3: Bridging Loans

Bridging finance is short-term borrowing secured against your property – ideal for funding renovations quickly before refinancing. Bridging loans provide rapid access to capital and are commonly used when remortgage funds would be delayed. Bridging loans are fast and flexible but usually carry higher interest rates, plus arrangement and exit fees. Borrowers typically repay the bridge by remortgaging or selling the property after the work is complete.

Option 4: Green Home-Improvement Loans

Some lenders offer green loans with preferential rates for energy-efficient renovations, such as installing solar panels, heat pumps or insulation. These can be structured as personal loans or second charges and may attract cashback or rate discounts if your property’s EPC rating improves. Check whether your mortgage provider participates in green lending schemes or consider specialist lenders.

Option 5: Full Remortgage

Remortgaging involves replacing your existing mortgage with a new loan. The advantage is simplicity: one loan, potentially at a lower rate than second-charge or bridging finance. However, remortgaging could mean leaving a low fixed rate and paying an early-repayment charge. It may still be worth it if you need to borrow significant sums and current rates are lower than second-charge or bridging options.

Factors to Consider

When deciding how to unlock equity, weigh the following:

- **Interest rate differential:** Compare the cost of second-charge or bridging loans against the rate you’d pay on a remortgage.
- **Fees:** Second-charge and bridging loans often have arrangement, broker and valuation fees.
- **Loan-to-value:** A high LTV may limit your options; bridging lenders may lend up to 75 % of the property value, but this varies.
- **Affordability and credit:** If your income has changed or your credit score has fallen, a second charge or bridging loan might be easier to obtain than a full remortgage.
- **Purpose and duration:** For short-term needs (e.g. refurbishing before selling), a bridging loan may be appropriate. For long-term consolidation, a remortgage or further advance may be better.

Example: Choosing the Right Option

Imagine David, who has a £150 000 mortgage fixed at 2 % until 2027 and wants £50 000 to build an extension. His current lender’s further advance rate is 5.0 %. A second-charge lender offers 7.5 % with

interest-only payments, while bridging finance quotes 8.5 % but would be repaid within 12 months when the work is done and the property revalued. After assessing fees and his income stability, David opts for a second charge because he prefers fixed monthly payments and plans to repay the loan over ten years. Had he needed the funds for just a few months and been confident of a quick sale, bridging might have been cheaper despite the higher rate.

Professional Advice Is Key

Each option has nuances. Mortgage brokers specialise in comparing these products and can advise on affordability, eligibility and total costs. They can also check whether a further advance or green loan from your current lender is possible. Advisers help you avoid common pitfalls like overlooking early-repayment charges or taking on unaffordable debt.

Unlocking equity without giving up a low mortgage rate is possible through second-charge loans, further advances, bridging finance and green loans. The right choice depends on your circumstances, loan size, project duration and risk tolerance. Before making a decision, seek professional advice to ensure the solution fits your wider financial strategy.

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Buy-to-Let Resilience: High Rents, Lower Rates and Preparing for Changes

The buy-to-let (BTL) sector has faced a barrage of headwinds in recent years – tax relief restrictions, extra stamp duty, tougher affordability rules and impending energy-efficiency requirements. Yet the market has remained remarkably resilient.

Data from UK Finance show that buy-to-let lending surged 39 % in Q4 2024 and 32 % in Q1 2025 as investors rushed to lock in deals before further tax changes^[1]. At the same time, arrears remain low: there were 11,830 BTL mortgages in arrears of 2.5 % or more in Q1 2025, 6 % fewer than in the previous quarter^[2]. With rents rising and rates easing, landlords have opportunities, but looming regulatory changes mean they must plan carefully.

Market Forces: Rents and Rates

The rental market continues to tighten. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) reports that average UK private rents rose 7.0 % to £1,339 in the 12 months to May 2025^[3], outpacing wage growth in some regions. Demand outstrips supply, particularly for family homes, pushing yields higher. Meanwhile, mortgage rates have eased from their 2023 peak; average two-year fixed rates have fallen to around 4.5 %. Although rates remain above the ultra-low levels of 2020–2021, lower financing costs coupled with strong rental income make BTL investments attractive for some.

Tax and Regulatory Landscape

Landlords still face significant challenges:

Stamp Duty: An additional 3 % stamp duty surcharge applies to second homes and investment properties. UK Finance forecasts buy-to-let purchase lending will fall 7 % in 2025 to £9 billion^[4], partly due to the surcharge.

Mortgage Interest Relief: Since April 2020, individual landlords can no longer deduct mortgage interest from rental income; instead they receive a 20 % tax credit. Higher-rate taxpayers therefore pay more tax on rental profits.

EPC Upgrades: The government proposes raising the minimum EPC rating to C by 2028/2030. Upgrading older properties can be costly, with 34 % of landlords expecting to spend £1 000–£10 000^[1].

Corporation Tax and Dividend Tax: For landlords operating via limited companies, corporation tax rose from 19 % to up to 25 % for profits above £250 000 in 2023. Dividend tax rates have also increased, reducing net returns.

Market Resilience and Opportunities

Despite these pressures, the sector shows resilience:

Strong Rental Growth: Average rents grew 7 % annually^[3], with

some regions (North East, Scotland) seeing even faster growth.

Low Arrears: Only 0.61 % of BTL mortgages were in arrears in Q1 2025^[2]. This indicates that most landlords are managing repayments despite higher rates.

Falling Rates and Competitive Lenders: Specialist lenders are returning to the market, offering products tailored to portfolio landlords and limited companies, with affordability assessed on rental income rather than personal income^[1]. As fixed rates ease, landlords remortgaging from 2020–2021 deals can still find competitive products.

Diversification: Landlords are diversifying into holiday lets or corporate lets to maximise yields. Others invest via limited companies to benefit from deducting mortgage interest against rental income (though stamp duty applies).

Preparing for the Future

To thrive in this evolving environment, landlords should:

Review Mortgage Deals: Many loans taken out in 2020–2021 are reaching the end of their fixed periods. Shop around six months before expiry to avoid reverting to the lender's standard variable rate and consider longer-term fixes while rates remain lower.

Budget for EPC Upgrades: Prioritise properties with lower EPC ratings for improvements. Simple measures such as loft

insulation and draught-proofing can offer quick wins. Consider green finance options or bridging loans to fund major upgrades while keeping your primary mortgage intact.

Assess Ownership Structure: Operating via a limited company may still be beneficial for higher-rate taxpayers, as mortgage interest is fully deductible. However, tax advice is essential because corporation tax and dividend rates may erode benefits. Switching existing properties into a company can trigger capital gains tax and stamp duty.

Plan for Tax Changes: Keep abreast of potential further reforms, including talk of stamp duty adjustments or council tax changes for second homes. Maintain an emergency fund to manage unexpected costs or void periods.

Consider Tenant Affordability: With rents rising faster than wages, affordability pressures could increase arrears in future. Vet tenants carefully and consider offering longer tenancies to reduce turnover.

In Conclusion

The buy-to-let sector in 2025 is a story of contrasts: regulatory headwinds versus strong rental tailwinds. Rents are high and arrears are low, but landlords face tax burdens and looming

EPC costs. Those who plan early by reviewing mortgages, budgeting for upgrades and choosing the right ownership structure can continue to achieve solid returns. As always, professional advice is invaluable in navigating this complex landscape.

Source Data:

[1] **Financial Reporter** – The buy-to-let market: Why we're invested in its success

[2] **UK Finance** – Arrears and possessions: Latest data Q1 2025

[3] **Office for National Statistics** – Private rent and house and house prices, UK: June 2025

[4] **Financial Reporter** – Mortgage lending to grow by 11% in 2025: UK Finance

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