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Autumn Budget 2025: What Changed for Homeowners & Movers

Your Home's Christmas Wish List

A few smart tweaks lift your home for Christmas visits and leave you with a calmer, tidier space in the new year.

Open-finance Mortgages Are Coming

Lenders could pull the info they need straight from your bank or budgeting apps, instead of asking you to email piles of PDFs.

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Featured **This Month**

As 2025 draws to a close, it's time to get organised at home and with your finances.

This month we cover funding 2026 projects, whether furnishing a rental pays off, open-finance mortgages and paperwork, the recent Autumn Budget, and a Christmas wish list to get your home season-ready.

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.

The 'Should I Furnish?' Guide for Landlords

Furnishing a rental can help it let faster and photograph better, but it also brings wear & costs. The right answer depends on your property and the people you want to attract.



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Your Home's Christmas Wish List

Your Home's Christmas Wish List

From the hallway hello to the guest towel stack, a few smart tweaks lift your home for Christmas visits and leave you with a calmer, tidier space in the new year.

Under £50: Quick Wins You'll Notice Immediately

Entrance doormat upgrade: A new coir mat with a neat border cleans up the threshold and sets the tone. Go plain or subtly striped; avoid novelty patterns so it still looks right in January.

Scent: One good diffuser or candle (hall or cloakroom) does more than three cheap ones scattered around. Look for clean citrus, soft woods or linen notes that are fresh, rather than festive so it lasts past New Year.

Switch and socket faceplates: Replacing yellowed plastic with clean white or screwless plates quietly modernises a room.

Door handles on the main sightline: Instead of doing the whole house, change just the handles you can see from the hallway or living room. A consistent finish in that view—matte black or brushed brass—makes everything feel more intentional without a big spend.

Textile touch: one throw, two cushions: A single neutral throw and a pair of cushions add texture without bulk. Choose a plain weave or subtle herringbone that works with both winter and spring palettes.

Guest hand-towel refresh: Two new hand towels for the cloakroom. Mid-weight so they dry fast; neutral so they always look crisp.

Under £150: "looks Finished" Upgrades

Hallway runner: A slim, low-pile runner instantly tidies a corridor, softens echo and protects floors. Washable fabrics earn their keep through muddy months.

Picture ledge with framed prints: One narrow shelf plus three frames lets you rotate art or family photos without drilling every time.

Dining table kit that elevates any meal: A linen-look tablecloth, simple napkins and solid coasters/placemats will carry you through Christmas lunch and weekday dinners. Start with a neutral base and add colour with sprigs or candles if you want to be festive!

Kitchen hardware edit: Change the most visible knobs/pulls - the island, the top drawers, or the bank you face most often. Matching screws and a paper template keep the job neat.

Door seal + draught excluder combo: Warmer guests, lower bills. A tidy brush seal on the front door and a fabric excluder for the back door make old houses feel suddenly snug without touching the thermostat.

Cordless table lamp: Rechargeable lamps have gone mainstream and solve the "no socket where you need one" problem. Drop one on a console in the hall, a bookshelf, or down the centre of the dining table for flattering pools of light. It's the fastest way to make a room feel considered.

Splurge: Room-Defining Pieces:

Statement mirror, properly sized: Oversized beats too-small every time: A tall hallway or living-room mirror brightens dark days, expands space and gives guests an easy "final check" before heading out. Pair with a narrow shelf or tray for keys and post if you have room.

Front-door hardware set: Matching letterplate, knocker and handle in a single finish is a quiet transformation. Satin brass warms period doors; black ironwork suits cottages and contemporary facades alike. It's the first thing people touch, make it solid and it will feel expensive.

Larger living-room rug: Most rugs are bought too small. Aim for the front legs of the sofa and chairs on the rug so the seating reads as one zone. It pulls the room together, improves acoustics and makes January evenings feel cocooned.

Guest-ready bathroom bundle: A new shower handset, a wider mirror and a soft bath mat create that "luxury hotel" feel. If you want a material shift without tiling, add a teak stool or caddy to bring warmth and order.

Focus where eyes land and hands touch: the threshold, the first sightline, the seating zone, the small bathroom. Choose pieces that feel good now and still make sense in January.

Autumn Budget 2025:

What Changed for Homeowners & Movers

The Chancellor's November Budget was preceded by a rare leak of the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) report, meaning that the property industry knew the headline measures hours before the speech. There were no surprise give-aways for first-time buyers or downsizers and no sweeping stamp-duty reforms. Instead the Government opted for a series of revenue-raising measures intended to spread the tax burden more evenly between earned income and passive wealth. For homeowners, landlords and people hoping to move house, the most notable changes are summarised below.

The New High-value Council Tax Surcharge (The So-Called "Mansion Tax")

From April 2028 a high-value council tax surcharge will apply in England to homes valued above £2 million (using 2026 prices). The OBR explains that there will be four price bands: a £2,500 annual charge for properties in the £2-2.5 million band and up to £7,500 for homes worth more than £5 million, with the amounts uprated each year by consumer-price inflation. These charges will be in addition to existing council tax and will be payable to central government rather than local councils. Officials expect the surcharge to raise about £0.4 billion per year by 2029-30.

The Government says fewer than one per cent of properties will fall into the net, but the proposal raises practical questions. The valuation exercise will be based on 2026 figures, yet property prices can vary widely by region and

between similar homes. The OBR anticipates that the surcharge will lead to price bunching, where sellers keep values just below a band boundary, and notes that full pass-through of the charge into house prices and bunching behaviour will reduce the number of properties within scope and lower yields from other property taxes. The Government has announced a consultation on reliefs, exemptions and deferral mechanisms to support those who cannot pay immediately. The long lead-time to 2028 should allow homeowners to plan ahead and seek advice if they are likely to be affected.

For homeowners considering a move, the surcharge may encourage some older owners to downsize earlier than planned. It could also create pressure on the prime London market, where modest flats often exceed £2 million, though the ability to defer the charge until sale or death may temper immediate selling pressure. Buyers near the threshold will need to factor the surcharge into affordability calculations, potentially capping how much they can borrow and adding to the deposit needed. Overall, while headline-grabbing, the surcharge applies to a small share of properties and its broader market impact is likely to be modest.

Property Income Tax Hike for Landlords

Perhaps more significant for the wider housing market is the decision to raise the tax rates on rental income. From April 2027, the basic, higher and additional rates of property income tax will each rise by two percentage

points, bringing them to 22 %, 42 % and 47 % respectively. The OBR estimates that the measure will bring in about £0.5 billion per year on average from 2028-29.

The Government's justification is that landlords currently pay no National Insurance on rental income, meaning a higher-rate landlord can pay considerably less tax than a tenant earning the same salary. However, the change increases the tax burden on an already strained buy-to-let sector. The OBR notes that part of the tax will feed through into higher rents, but that this will be more than offset by slightly lower house prices. Cumulative policy changes – such as reduced mortgage interest relief, tighter capital-gains rules and new Renters' Rights legislation – have already squeezed returns. For some landlords the extra tax may be the tipping point that pushes them to sell; reduced rental supply could put upward pressure on rents, affecting tenants' budgets.

Investors using property to provide income in retirement need to reconsider portfolio structure. Shifting properties into a limited company may still make sense for higher-rate taxpayers, but incorporation comes with costs. The measure reinforces the Government's broader message that earned income should not be taxed more heavily than unearned income, and that other tax-advantaged vehicles such as ISAs may become relatively more attractive for long-term investors.

OBR Forecasts for The Housing Market

While the Budget itself included few direct housing policies, the accompanying OBR Economic and Fiscal Outlook provides insight into where the market may be heading. The OBR forecasts that average interest rates on the stock of mortgages will rise from around 3.7 % in 2024 to about 5 % by 2029, reflecting expectations that Bank Rate will stay higher for longer. Because roughly 90 % of mortgages are fixed-rate, the pass-through of higher rates happens gradually as borrowers refinance. Households coming off low-rate deals in 2025-27 should budget for higher monthly repayments, and lenders may continue to stress-test affordability at elevated rates.

On the supply side, net additions to the housing stock are expected to fall from an average of about 260,000 homes a year in the early 2020s to a low of 215,000 in 2026-27 as the slowdown in new housing starts filters through. Planning reforms are expected to reverse this trend, and the OBR projects that net additions will rebound sharply to around 305,000 in 2029-30, leaving 1.49 million cumulative additions between 2024-25 and 2029-30.

For prospective buyers and sellers, the OBR expects house prices to rise from about £260,000 in 2024 to just under £305,000 in 2030. Prices are forecast to grow just under 3 % in 2025 and average around 2½ % a year from 2026 – broadly in line with earnings growth. The property income tax increase is expected to shave about 0.1 percentage points off annual house-price growth from 2028. Residential housing transactions, after a volatile 2025, are projected to rise from just under 1.1 million in 2024 to about 1.3 million by 2029, although this is around 155,000 fewer transactions per year than predicted in March. The OBR attributes the weaker medium-term outlook to higher

stamp duty, higher mortgage rates and an ageing population that moves less often. Residential investment is expected to pick up strongly in 2027 and 2028 as monetary policy loosens and planning reforms take effect before moderating again by 2030.

Taken together, these forecasts paint a picture of a market still adjusting to higher borrowing costs but not facing a dramatic collapse. Modest price growth and stable transaction volumes suggest a relatively balanced market, though the combination of higher rates and new taxes will continue to put pressure on affordability.

Savings and Tax Thresholds

Although not strictly a housing measure, the Budget announcement on Individual Savings Account (ISA) allowances may affect how people save for deposits or build financial buffers. From April 2027, the overall £20,000 ISA allowance will be retained, but under-65s will only be able to hold £12,000 in cash, with the remaining £8,000 reserved for investments in stocks and shares. Savers over 65 will continue to enjoy the full cash allowance. Building societies have warned that pushing more savers into equities could reduce their deposit base and ultimately constrain funding for mortgages; however, the Government sees the reform as a way to channel more capital into productive investment. Prospective borrowers should review their savings strategy to ensure they can still meet deposit requirements while managing risk.

Impact on Older Homeowners and Later-life Borrowers

The freeze on many personal tax thresholds and the new property surcharge have particular implications for older homeowners. Freezing income-tax bands drags more pensioners into paying tax on their state and private pensions, while rising house

prices could push more estates into the inheritance-tax net. The combination of these pressures and the new council-tax surcharge will increase outgoings for asset-rich but income-poor homeowners. As a result, tapping into housing equity – through downsizing or lifetime mortgages – may become more important, and demand for flexible later-life lending products is likely to grow. Older homeowners should consider seeking professional advice to explore the full range of options rather than relying solely on conventional mortgage routes.

What the Budget Didn't Include

The property industry had hoped for measures to stimulate activity. In the run-up to the Budget, mortgage brokers called for stamp-duty holidays or a shift of the tax from buyers to sellers, targeted reliefs for energy-efficient homes and an expansion of the Lifetime ISA property price cap. None of these proposals materialised. There was also no revival of Help to Buy or other shared-equity schemes for first-time buyers. The absence of demand-side incentives means that the market will continue to rely on organic drivers such as earnings growth, mortgage rates and planning reforms.

Overall Perspective

The Budget's headline measures are about tax equalisation: a new surcharge on homes over £2 million and higher tax on rental income, with little to spur demand. Unless you own a very expensive property or derive substantial rent, the immediate impact is limited; for movers, high mortgage rates and unchanged stamp duty remain the bigger obstacles. If you'd like to understand how these changes could affect your mortgage or property plans, please get in touch for a personalised review.

Source Data
Office for Budget Responsibility
– Economic & Fiscal Outlook

Open-Finance Mortgages Are Coming: Less Paperwork Going Forward?

In October the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) said it's running a test programme to bring "open finance" into mortgages.

In plain English: with your permission, lenders could pull the info they need straight from your bank or budgeting apps, instead of asking you to email piles of PDFs.

First, What is "Open Finance"?

It's an extension of open banking. You stay in control, but you can choose to share your financial data securely with approved providers for a specific task - like getting a mortgage or switching deals. No one sees anything unless you say yes, and you can revoke access. The FCA's tests are about making this work safely for mortgages.

What the FCA is Testing

From November 2025 to February 2026, the FCA is running "TechSprints" (think supervised trials) focused on two big goals:

Make applying and remortgaging simpler. That includes smoother affordability checks, counting things like regular rent payments and saving habits, and showing real-time product options.

Make overpaying easier. Clearer information and in-app journeys so it's simple to chip away at your balance when you can.

What This Could Mean for you in 2026

Fewer documents to chase

Rather than hunting for six months of bank statements, payslips and screenshots, you could give one-time permission for a secure data pull. Your income, bills and regular spending would be verified automatically. That means fewer back-and-forth emails and less chance of something going missing.

Faster "Can I afford it?" answers

Because the same data can feed affordability and eligibility at once, you should get a clearer yes/no sooner - and a better sense of which deals you actually qualify for before you commit to a full application.

Smarter timing on remortgages

The FCA's test includes "smart prompts" before a fixed rate ends. In practice, you might get a nudge a few months out with your key info already filled, a live view of what you can afford, and side-by-side options you could act on there and then.

Overpayments made simple

Plenty of people intend to overpay but rarely do. The trials look at showing the impact clearly - "pay £50 extra and save £X interest" - and letting you action it from the same screen, using the data you've already shared.

What Won't Change

Open finance doesn't mean "computer says yes" and that's it. Lenders will still make judgements, and tricky cases will still need human eyes. The tests are about fixing the admin, not removing checks that protect borrowers.

Likely Timeline

- **Now to Feb 2026:** The FCA-backed tests run and gather evidence.
- **After that:** Expect limited roll-outs and partner pilots first, then wider adoption as the FCA finalises its roadmap and firms build the features.

Your Questions Answered...

Is my data safe?

The whole point of the programme is to build clear, permission-based data sharing with proper safeguards. You choose what's shared, with whom, and for how long - and you can switch it off.

Will rent and savings habits help me?

That's part of the testing. If evidence of regular rent payments and consistent saving can be used cleanly, it could strengthen your case, especially for first-time buyers or people with thinner credit files.

Do I still need to send anything?

Sometimes, yes. The aim is "less paperwork," not "no paperwork." Think one consent step replacing multiple uploads, with a shorter to-do list overall.

Can this help me switch deals on time?

That's the idea behind the pre-expiry prompts and embedded switching journeys: a heads-up before your rate ends, plus a clear route to compare and act without starting from scratch.

The FCA is pushing real-world tests to make mortgage admin lighter and clearer. If the trials land as planned, 2026 could be the year you spend less time hunting for documents, and more time getting a straight answer about what you can borrow or how to switch - all with your permission and control.

Source Data

Mortgage Solutions - FCA runs open finance test programme for mortgages

The 'Should I Furnish?'

Guide for Landlords

Furnishing a rental can help it let faster and photograph better, but it also brings wear, costs and a bit more to manage.

The right answer depends on your property, the people you want to attract, and how you handle turnarounds. Here's a clear run-through for 2026, covering audience, voids, wear and tear, storage and delivery timing.

Start With Your Market, Not Your Furniture

Think about who actually rents on your street. A city-centre one-bed aimed at relocations or young professionals usually benefits from being "ready to live in": a stable bed, a decent sofa, a table and chairs, fitted blinds or curtains and the expected white goods. These homes can look flat in photos when empty; furnishing helps people judge size and picture life there, which tends to speed enquiries.

A family house tells a different story. Many longer-term renters already own furniture and want space for it. In those areas, unfurnished (with white goods and proper window coverings) often feels calmer and lets just as quickly. If your building attracts both groups, a sensible middle path works: part-furnished with the bulky basics in place and the option to remove one big item on request. The point isn't to impress with styling - it's to make the listing match the audience.

Voids Are the Real Lever

Rent increases get attention, but empty weeks decide your year. Look back at what's actually

shifted nearby: did furnished flats in your block go first, or did unfurnished homes move just as fast? If furnishing plainly shortens the gap between tenancies, that's a strong reason to do it. If it makes no difference to speed - or attracts more short stays than you want - keep it lean. The advert should say exactly what's included so you pull the right enquiries and avoid wasted viewings.

Be Honest About Wear and Tear

Supplying furniture means you own the maintenance. That doesn't have to be a headache if you buy with use in mind. Go for sturdy frames, mid-tone fabrics that hide marks, wipeable tables and wardrobes you can tighten with a hex key. Mattress protectors should be standard. One solid dining table is better than a wobbly set with extra chairs no one needs. Expect to refresh high-use items over time; plan for that and you'll stay ahead of problems.

Clarity Beats "Anything is Possible"

Flexibility can widen your pool, but it needs guardrails. Applicants often say, "We love it, but we've got our own bed." Decide your stance before you list: will you remove one large item, keep everything as shown, or offer short-term storage while they arrange collection? Set the rule, put it in the advert, and stick to it. Changing course after offers are out is how delays and disputes start.

Delivery Timing Makes or Breaks Goodwill

A furnished or part-furnished promise only works if the items are in place on day one. Check stock rather than trusting "express" labels. Book delivery and assembly before key release. Photograph each room exactly as it will be handed over, then use those photos in both the advert and the inventory. That way the online story matches reality, and everyone knows where they stand. Small practical touches like a washable hallway runner and a solid doormat protect the rest of your spend from the first wet day.

Make Unfurnished Look Finished

Unfurnished doesn't mean bare. Fitted blinds or lined curtains, clean sightlines and good light tell a complete story without turning you into a furniture manager. A tall mirror in the hallway or living room brightens photos and helps viewers understand proportions. Within each view, keep metal finishes consistent so the rooms read calm rather than mismatched. These are small choices that lift a listing without adding ongoing responsibility.

Safety and Simple Paperwork

If you supply upholstered items, they must meet UK fire-safety rules and carry the right labels. Anything electrical should be safe and working. List exactly

what's included in the advert and the tenancy, and make sure the inventory shows it clearly with photos taken at handover. Clear documentation avoids arguments later and speeds resolutions if something goes wrong.

Bringing it Together for 2026

If your photos look incomplete without furniture and your market prizes convenience, furnish fully, but keep it sensible and durable, not decorative for decoration's sake. If your area skews to longer stays, lead with space and let people bring their own things; unfurnished with white goods and fitted window coverings is often the easiest, quickest route. Where you serve both groups, part-furnished with a single, clearly stated swap option gives you reach without turning changeovers into a removal job.

In the end, the best choice is the one that shortens your voids, fits how you manage a tenancy, and sets clear expectations from the first click to move-in day. Pick the route that tells the right story for your property, keep the specification practical, and make sure what's promised online is exactly what's waiting at the keys. That's how you attract the right renter and keep the year running smoothly.

Planning a Project in 2026?

Three Ways People Pay for It

However big the plan, whether it be a new kitchen, loft or insulation push, the funding decision usually comes down to three routes. The right choice depends on how quickly you want to start, what you're comfortable paying each month, and whether your project includes EPC-lifting upgrades that may qualify for help.

Save Then Spend

This is the cleanest path: set a target, build the pot, pay the invoices when work begins. There's no interest and no paperwork, which keeps the headspace clear. It also gives you a hard stop on costs - once the money's gone, the project ends - so scope creep is easier to resist. The trade-off is time. Quotes can shift while you save, and contractor slots don't always stay open. If your plan is a "want" rather than a "must", saving first keeps life simple. It also meshes well with energy upgrades that already benefit from tax relief: the installation of many energy-saving materials (like certain insulation and heat pumps) is on 0% VAT in Great Britain until 31 March 2027, which reduces the bill even if you're paying cash.

Add on With Your Current Lender

If you have a mortgage, you can ask your existing lender for extra funds for the work and repay it alongside your loan. The attraction is familiarity: one provider, one payment, and a monthly figure that can be

easier to live with because the cost is spread over years. This fits bigger upgrades you'd like to start now, such as extensions, full kitchens, whole-house insulation - provided the longer payback still makes sense for the life of the improvement. The thing to watch out for is total cost and timing. Stretching a short-life project over a long term can mean paying more overall, and you'll still go through affordability checks. If part of the work lifts your EPC (for example cavity or loft insulation), it's worth checking area schemes before you borrow the whole amount; the Great British Insulation Scheme is running to March 2026 and is targeted at less-efficient homes, while ECO4 support for energy-saving measures is also scheduled to run to March 2026 (with government consulting on timing beyond that). Using grants or subsidised measures first can reduce how much you need to add to the mortgage.

Separate Borrowing

Here you leave the mortgage alone and take a standalone loan for the project. The draw is

control and clarity: fixed term, fixed payment, clear finish line, and decisions can be quick if a builder has a slot. The monthly amount can be higher than adding to the mortgage because the term is usually shorter, so you need to be sure the payment fits comfortably. This route suits defined projects that you want ring-fenced - bathroom now, windows next year - without reopening your main mortgage deal. It also pairs neatly with specific incentives: if you're installing a heat pump in England or Wales, the Boiler Upgrade Scheme currently offers grants (£7,500 toward air- or ground-source systems), which can shrink the amount you need to borrow; combine that with the temporary 0% VAT on qualifying energy-saving installations and the total can be markedly lower than you expect.

Where EPC Upgrades Fit, in Practice

If your project includes insulation, efficient glazing, draught-proofing or low-carbon heating, plan the funding sequence before you sign anything. Start by checking eligibility for national help (GB Insulation Scheme and ECO4 run through March 2026) and any local programmes; then layer your own funding route on what's left. For some households that means paying cash for the insulation while using a modest loan for the kitchen; for others it

may be a further advance that covers everything in one go. Either way, the 0% VAT window on many energy-saving installations runs to 31 March 2027, so there's a clear timetable for making those elements cheaper.

How to Choose, Without Overthinking It

If the job can wait and you value a clean finish, saving first is hard to beat, especially for smaller upgrades where VAT relief already trims the bill. If you're ready to move on a larger plan and prefer one steady payment, speaking to your current lender can make sense, as long as the longer term still feels sensible for the work you're funding. If speed and a set end date matter, a separate loan keeps the project tidy and can sit alongside grants

for EPC-lifting measures so you only finance what you have to. The common thread is alignment: match the route to your timeline, your monthly comfort level, and the EPC elements that attract support, and your 2026 project will start on solid ground.

Source Data

Great British Insulation Scheme (GBIS) - GOV.UK

Energy Company Obligation (ECO4) - GOV.UK

Boiler Upgrade Scheme (heat pump grants) - GOV.UK



Need a Hand with Your Mortgage Plans?

Whether you're thinking about remortgaging, moving home, or just want to explore your options, we're only a call or email away.

Happy with our service?

The best compliment you can give is a recommendation. If you have friends, family or colleagues who could use expert mortgage advice, we'd love to help them too.

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