



January 2026

New-Year Property Resolutions

Declutter, Improve, Add Value

Renters' Rights Act 2025

Preparing For The End
Of Section 21

The government has published a roadmap setting out how the new rules will be rolled out from 1 May 2026.

Joint Borrower, Sole Proprietor Mortgages

Ways To Help Family

A JBSP mortgage lets a family member support someone's mortgage using their income, without gifting a cash deposit.

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Featured **This Month**

Happy New Year. January is a good time to reset – tidy up your home, sense-check your mortgage, and make small moves that add up over the year.

This issue covers solo first-time buyers, family-supported JBSP options, quick-sale staging, and what landlords need to know as Section 21

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.

Joint Borrower, Sole Proprietary Sole Proprietor Mortgages: Family Help Without Joint Ownership

A JBSP mortgage can be a good way for families to help the First Time Buyer's in their lives.



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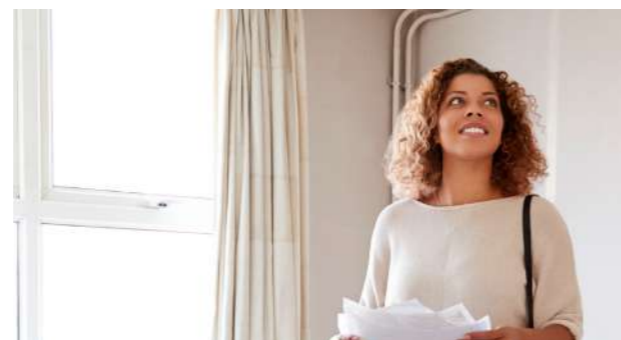
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New-Year Property Resolutions Declutter, Improve, Add Value

January is when lots of us promise to get fitter, eat better and spend less. Your home – and your mortgage – deserve the same attention.

A few simple “property resolutions” at the start of the year can tidy up your space, trim your bills and keep your finances on track.

Here's a practical checklist to work through over the next few weeks.

Clear The Clutter

Start with the easy win: get rid of what you don't use.

- Pick one room, cupboard or drawer at a time.
- Sort items into “keep, donate, sell, recycle”.
- Take photos of anything with sentimental value before letting it go.

Donating to local charities or community groups keeps things out of landfill and helps someone else. If you sell a few pieces on Vinted, eBay or Facebook Marketplace, you can ring-fence that money for overpaying the mortgage or funding a small home upgrade.

Give Your Budget A Health Check

Next, look at what's coming in and going out.

- **List your regular bills:** mortgage, council tax, energy, broadband, mobiles, insurances, subscriptions.
- **Check bank statements** for “stealth” payments you've forgotten about.
- **Decide which costs you can switch,** shrink or cancel.

Money guidance bodies suggest reviewing your mortgage and major bills at least once a year to make sure you're getting good value and could cope if rates or prices move. An evening

with a spreadsheet now can save you real money over the next 12 months.

Book A “Mortgage MOT”

Think of this as the financial version of a car service: a once-a-year look under the bonnet. Ask:

- When does your current deal end?
- What rate will you move to afterwards – and what would that do to your payments?
- Has anything changed since you last arranged the mortgage (income, debts, family, future plans)?

Independent guidance often recommends checking what your current lender can offer and then comparing it with the wider market to see if a better deal is available. Even if you don't switch immediately, you'll know what's coming – and can plan for it.

If you're not confident doing this yourself, a mortgage adviser can run the numbers and explain your options.

Tackle Quick-Fix Home Improvements

You don't have to rip out a kitchen to add value or comfort. Start with low-cost jobs that pay you back:

- **Draught-proof doors and windows** – cheap kits can make old homes feel much less chilly.
- **Top up loft insulation** if it's noticeably below modern standards.
- **Bleed radiators** and move furniture away from them so heat can circulate.

Consider whether this is the year to fit a smart thermostat. Data from one major provider suggest a typical UK household could save around £192 per year by using smarter heating controls to cut wasted energy^[1]. That's the sort of upgrade that can pay for itself quickly while making the home more comfortable.

Check Insurance, Protection And Wills

Finally, zoom out and look at the “what ifs”.

- **Home insurance** – is the rebuild cost and contents cover still realistic? Have you added anything expensive that needs specifying?
- **Life and income protection** – would your household still manage the mortgage if one income stopped?
- **Wills and lasting powers of attorney** – dull on the surface, but crucial if you own a property or have dependents.

If you already have cover in place, make sure the details still reflect your situation. If you don't, the start of the year is a good moment to plug the gaps.

Starting The Year On The Front Foot

If you'd like help sense-checking your mortgage or broader plans for the year ahead, get in touch and an adviser will be able to talk through your options.

Source Data [1] Registered Gas Engineer (via Hive data) – Smart Brits Have Saved £500 Million On Energy Bills

Renters' Rights Act 2025

Preparing For The End Of Section 21

The Renters' Rights Act 2025 is now law. It received Royal Assent in October 2025, and the government has published a roadmap showing how **the new regime will roll out from 1 May 2026**. For private landlords, that date marks the start of the biggest shake-up in assured shorthold tenancies for decades – including the end of Section 21.

This isn't a change that can be left until the week before a renewal. It alters how tenancies start, how they end, and how you'll be expected to evidence compliance.

What Changes On 1 May 2026?

From 1 May 2026, Phase 1 of the Act comes into force for the private rented sector in England. Key points include:

- **Move To Periodic Tenancies:** New and existing assured tenancies in scope will convert into Assured Periodic Tenancies. Fixed terms (under 21 years) will no longer be used in the usual way – tenancies will roll on, with tenants able to stay as long as they wish unless the landlord can rely on a valid possession ground.
- **Abolition Of Section 21:** Section 21 'no-fault' evictions under the Housing Act 1988 will be abolished. Landlords will no longer be able to serve a Section 21 notice to recover possession without giving a reason.
- **Reformed Possession Grounds:** Section 8 grounds will be expanded and re-worked. The roadmap makes clear that landlords will have "clear and expanded possession grounds", including strengthened grounds for serious, persistent rent arrears and anti-social behaviour, alongside grounds to sell or move back in^[1]. The expectation is that repossessions will still be possible where there is a genuine reason – but you will need evidence.
- **Linked Measures:** Phase 1 also brings in limits on rent increases (once per year via a revised Section 13 process), restrictions on rental bidding, and new protections against discrimination for tenants with children or on benefits.

Database And Ombudsman – What's Coming Next?

Phase 2 starts from late 2026 and is all about transparency and redress.

- **PRS Property Database:** All private landlords will have to register on a new national Database of PRS Properties and pay an annual fee. For each property, you'll need to supply core information such as contact details, property type, occupancy and key safety documents (gas, electrical and EPC certificates).
Over time, parts of this information will be visible to tenants and local authorities, and councils will use it to target enforcement.
- **Mandatory Landlord Ombudsman:** Phase 2 will also see the creation of a dedicated PRS Landlord Ombudsman scheme, with membership mandatory for private landlords.
The Ombudsman will offer binding redress on complaints and will be able to require apologies, remedial action or compensation. The government currently expects all landlords to be in scope by around 2028.

Later, a third phase will extend the Decent Homes Standard and Awaab's Law to the private rented sector, with timings to follow consultation.

How Does This Sit With The Wider Market?

The reforms arrive against a backdrop of higher interest rates, tax changes and rising regulatory expectations for landlords. Some smaller landlords have already chosen to exit.

However, the Financial Policy Committee at the Bank of England has noted that, while there has been some shrinkage in the private rented sector, recent landlord sales have not been large enough to create systemic risk or materially move house prices on their own. In other words, the sector remains an important and broadly resilient part of the housing market – but one under pressure to professionalise.

Practical Steps For Landlords Now

1. Review Tenancy Paperwork And Processes

The roadmap confirms that landlords will not have to re-issue existing tenancy agreements just because of the Act. However:

- You will need to provide an official government "Information Sheet" to existing tenants by 31 May 2026, explaining the changes.
- If you have any verbal tenancies, you will need to set out the main terms in writing by the same date.

It makes sense to:

- Audit your current agreements and renewals
- Standardise your templates in line with the upcoming rules once the draft model wording is published.
- Make sure any letting agents you use are updating their processes too

2. Update Your Approach To Possession

With Section 21 going, every future possession claim will stand or fall on the strength of your grounds and your records. That means:

- Keeping a clear rent schedule and arrears history
- Logging complaints, anti-social behaviour incidents and correspondence
- Recording inspection dates, findings and any remedial work

If you rely on an agent, ask how they are adapting their arrears and eviction processes to the new Section 8 regime.

3. Get Ready For The Database

Phase 2 may feel a long way off, but pulling together accurate data can take time, especially if you hold multiple properties or have incomplete records. To avoid a scramble when registration becomes mandatory, start building a file for each property covering:

- Ownership details
- Address, property type and occupancy
- EPC, gas safety and electrical safety certificates
- Licensing information (if applicable)

This information will be needed for both the Database and, in practice, for any Ombudsman complaint.

4. Think About Strategy, Not Just Compliance

For some landlords, the new rules will reinforce a decision to scale back. For others, the direction of travel may favour a more professional, better-documented operation that can demonstrate high standards and justify sustainable rents. Either way, it's sensible to:

- Revisit your business plan in light of the new tenancy regime
- Stress-test cash flow if eviction takes longer or requires more evidence
- Factor in future compliance costs such as database fees and potential energy-efficiency upgrades

Avoiding Legal Pitfalls

The headline message is simple: Section 21 is going, and tenancies are becoming open-ended. The detail is more complex, and much of it will be fleshed out in secondary legislation over 2026.

Landlords who invest time now in tightening paperwork, record-keeping and governance will be better placed to adapt – and to demonstrate that they are "good landlords" in a much more open, data-rich system.

If you are unsure how the Renters' Rights Act 2025 will affect your portfolio or future plans, speak to a qualified property or mortgage adviser, and consider taking independent legal advice. If you'd like to discuss how the changes might apply to your situation, get in touch with an adviser who can review your circumstances in detail.

Source Data

[1] UK Government – Renters' Rights Act 2025: Implementation Roadmap



Solo First-Time Buyers Are on the Rise

Recent lender data show that applications from solo first-time buyers rose by 13% between January–May and June–October 2025, and – for the first time in five years – single applicants are now consistently ahead of joint ones^[1].

Why More People Are Buying on Their Own

Affordability Rules Easing at the Margins

The headline cost of borrowing is still a hurdle, but the mechanics behind the scenes have shifted. In 2025, the Bank of England allowed lenders to use higher loan-to-income (LTI) mortgages – those at 4.5 times income or above – within their overall lending mix. The change is expected to help around 36,000 extra first-time buyers into the market each year^[2].

Alongside this, some lenders have trimmed their internal “stress rates” (the higher notional rate used to test affordability) and adjusted how they assess income and spending. For certain borrowers on solid, predictable incomes, that can translate into a slightly higher maximum loan than was available a year or two ago.

Lifestyle, Timing and Priorities

People are forming households later in life and spending longer renting or living alone. Home ownership, however, still carries weight as a marker of security and independence.

For a growing number of people, waiting indefinitely for a partner whose finances align neatly feels less sensible than buying in their own name when they are able to do so.

A rise in solo female buyers fits the same pattern. More women are building careers, progressing

into higher-paid roles and choosing to secure a home before (or regardless of) major relationship milestones.

Affordability for Solo Buyers: The Key Moving Parts

Buying alone does not mean settling for a second-rate mortgage. It does, however, mean the sums have to work on one income.

1. Setting a workable monthly budget

Start with your true disposable income, not just your gross salary. Once tax, pension contributions, existing credit commitments and regular bills are stripped out, what remains has to cover:

- A **mortgage payment** that still feels comfortable if rates rise
- **Everyday spending** – food, transport, mobile, streaming, social life
- **Short-term goals** such as holidays
- **Longer-term savings** and an emergency buffer

Many solo buyers find it helpful to decide on a target mortgage payment as a percentage of take-home pay and treat that as a firm line, rather than stretching to the absolute maximum a lender might offer.

2. Working out a realistic deposit

On paper, a 5% deposit may now be enough to secure a mortgage with some lenders. In practice, it makes sense to think in layers:

- Core deposit – 5%, 10% or more of the purchase price
- Up-front costs – legal fees, searches, survey, moving costs
- Post-completion buffer – money left in the bank once you’ve moved in

Going all the way to zero immediately after completion can feel uncomfortable, particularly for a solo buyer with no second income as a safety net.

3. Choosing an appropriate term length

Longer mortgage terms – 30, 35 or even 40 years – are now common among first-time buyers. Spreading the debt over more years reduces the monthly payment, which can be the difference between passing and failing affordability when there is only one income in the mix. The trade-off is that total interest over the life of the loan is higher.

Two points to consider:

- A longer term now does not have to be permanent; you can shorten the term or overpay in future if your income rises.
- Small overpayments, if allowed by your lender, can shave years off the mortgage without locking you into a higher contractual payment.

Government Support: Freedom to Buy and 95% Mortgages

Low-deposit buyers had a moment of uncertainty in

mid-2025 when the previous Mortgage Guarantee Scheme closed on 30 June. A new, permanent version was then launched in July 2025 to keep the 95% loan-to-value market moving.

This permanent guarantee – widely known as Freedom to Buy – is designed to give lenders the confidence to keep offering high-LTV deals through different points in the economic cycle. It allows participating lenders to offer mortgages at 91–95% LTV, with the government underwriting part of the risk in case of default.

For solo first-time buyers, the key points are:

- A 5% deposit can be enough, provided the rest of the case is strong.
- Rates on 95% mortgages are usually higher than for 10% or 15% deposits, so it is worth comparing the long-term cost rather than focusing only on getting in with the smallest possible lump sum.
- The guarantee supports the lender, not the borrower; your home is still at risk if you do not keep up repayments.

Alongside Freedom to Buy, other options such as shared ownership, First Homes discounts and Lifetime ISAs may play a role, depending on income, deposit and location.

Making Solo Buying Work in Practice

The growing share of individual buyers shows that home ownership is increasingly achievable on a single income – but it still requires careful planning. The essentials are clear:

- Be honest with yourself about what you can afford month to month.
- Build a deposit plan that leaves you with some breathing space after completion.
- Think strategically about term length and the type of mortgage product you choose.
- Consider protection and savings so a bump in the road does not put the home at risk.

If you would like to discuss what buying solo could look like in your circumstances, get in touch and we can talk you through the options in detail.

Source Data

[1] Financial Reporter – Mortgage affordability changes spark rise in solo first-time buyers

[2] The Guardian – Bank of England rolls out looser mortgage rules to help FTB's





Joint Borrower, Sole Proprietor Mortgages

Family Help Without Joint Ownership

Plenty of parents and relatives would love to help the first time buyers in their life get onto the property ladder. The snag is that not everyone has £20,000–£50,000 sitting around to gift as a deposit or to release from their own home.

A joint borrower, sole proprietor (JBSP) mortgage is one way around that. Instead of passing over a lump sum, family members put their income behind the application so the buyer can borrow more – while the property stays in the buyer's name only. In most JBSP set-ups, up to four people can be on the mortgage, but just one is the legal owner on the title.

How a JBSP Mortgage Works

With a JBSP:

- Up to four people (usually close family) go on the mortgage as borrowers.
- The lender looks at everyone's income and outgoings when it works out affordability.
- Only one person – the “sole proprietor” – is named on the deeds and owns the property.

So the homeowner benefits from the extra borrowing power that comes from combining incomes, but they keep 100% of the legal ownership and any future gain in value.

Because the structure is now fairly well-established in the market, you'll see JBSP options across a range of loan-to-value (LTV) bands and

terms, often priced similarly to a lender's standard residential range.

How Families Can Use JBSP

1. Help without a cash gift

The big attraction is that supporters can help with income instead of savings. Parents might be comfortable committing to support payments each month, but unable or unwilling to hand over a large, one-off lump sum. JBSP lets that ongoing income support be reflected in the affordability calculation, so the buyer can often:

- Buy sooner than they could on their own, or
- Choose a better-suited home rather than compromising heavily on size or location.

2. No second-home stamp duty for helpers

With a standard joint purchase, if Mum or Dad already owns a home, the whole transaction can get hit with the 3% additional property stamp duty surcharge.

JBSP is different. Because the supporting family members don't go on the title, they aren't treated as buying another property. Typically, only the sole proprietor pays stamp duty, and they can still benefit from any first-time buyer relief where they meet the criteria.

That's a big reason JBSP crops up in discussions about keeping stamp duty bills under control when parents help.

3. Flexibility on ownership and tax

Supporters don't become co-owners, which can make life simpler later on. There's no need to unwind shared ownership if parents want to downsize, or if adult children partner up, marry or separate. Some building societies also highlight that, in certain scenarios, JBSP can help with wider tax planning – for example, ensuring buy-to-let ownership sits with the lower-rate taxpayer^[1].

The Catches: What To Keep In Mind

Everyone is equally liable

Although only one person owns the property, all borrowers are jointly and severally liable for the mortgage. If the main buyer can't keep up with payments, the lender will expect the other borrowers to step in – and missed payments will damage everyone's credit record.

That commitment can also limit supporters' future borrowing. When they come to remortgage or move themselves, lenders will factor in the JBSP commitment as if it were their own debt.

Lender rules on who can live there

Most lenders expect the sole proprietor to live in the property. Many don't want non-owning supporters to move in long-term, because that can muddy the water around their legal rights. Some lenders will only accept close family in the JBSP role, rather than friends or more distant relatives.

Older supporters can shorten the term

Because the mortgage has to be affordable into later life, the age of the oldest borrower often caps the term. Add a parent in their late 60s, and you may find:

- A 30–35 year term is no longer available
- The lender insists on a shorter term that fits within their retirement criteria

Shorter terms mean higher monthly payments, which can blunt the benefit of adding that extra income in the first place.

Key Points to Think Through

Independent legal advice

Non-owning borrowers usually have to take independent legal advice before completion. A good solicitor will explain:

- That they don't own the property, even though they're liable for the debt
- What happens if relationships change, or if the proprietor dies
- How any cash contributions should be documented (for example, via a declaration of trust)

This step protects both the homeowner and the supporters and shouldn't be treated as a tick-box exercise.

Agreeing an exit strategy

JBSP is rarely meant to last for the full mortgage term. Families should be upfront about:

- When they'd like the supporters to come off the mortgage – for example, at the end of the first fixed rate if the buyer's income has risen
- What happens if a supporter wants out earlier to free up borrowing power
- How things would be handled if someone's health, job or relationship status changes

Putting that plan in writing can avoid tough conversations later.

Checking the supporters' own plans

Supporters need to think about their own goals: future house moves, remortgaging, borrowing for business or retirement planning. A JBSP commitment could make those plans harder if affordability is tight.

Alternatives to Weigh Up

JBSP isn't the only route for family help. Other options include:

- **Guarantor mortgages** – supporters back the loan and only have to pay if the borrower falls behind, although their savings or home may be at risk if things go wrong.
- **Gifted deposit or equity** – simpler from a lender's point of view but needs a lump sum and can raise fairness questions if there are siblings.
- **Family offset / “springboard” style deals** – supporters park savings as extra security for a set period, then get the money back if repayments run smoothly.

Each route has a different balance of risk, control and flexibility.

A joint borrower, sole proprietor mortgage can be a powerful way for families who don't have spare cash, but do have steady income, to help someone they care about buy a home. It's also a serious financial commitment for everyone involved.

If you're considering this kind of arrangement, it's worth speaking to both a mortgage adviser and an independent solicitor. If you'd like to talk through whether JBSP or an alternative might suit your situation, get in touch and an adviser will be able to walk you through the options.

Source Data

[1] **Suffolk Building Society** – Joint Borrower Sole Proprietor Mortgages (JBSP)

Home Staging For A Quick Sale

When buyers scroll through pages of listings, the homes that stand out usually have one thing in common: they've been properly staged. Presentation won't fix over-pricing, but it can help you sell faster and negotiate from a stronger position.

Research drawing on Home Staging Association UK data suggests that staged homes can sell up to three times faster and achieve 8–10% higher prices than similar unstaged properties^[1]. Here are practical, low-stress ways to get your home market-ready.

Declutter And Depersonalise

Buyers need to see space and potential, not your laundry basket and photo wall.

- Strip back surfaces in kitchens, bathrooms and living areas.
- Put away most family photos, kids' artwork and very bold ornaments.
- Remove a few bulky pieces of furniture so rooms feel larger and easier to walk around.
- Tidy cupboards and wardrobes – people do open doors to check storage.

The goal isn't to make the home look empty; it's to keep enough personality for warmth, but not so much that buyers can't imagine their own.

Boost Kerb Appeal

First impressions start before anyone reaches the front door.

- Paint or clean the front door; polish handles and letterboxes.
- Cut grass, trim hedges and clear paths of weeds and moss.
- Add a couple of pots or a simple planter by the entrance.
- Clean windows and, if needed, jet-wash the drive or patio.

A tidy, cared-for exterior suggests the rest of the property has been looked after too.

Brighten And Modernise The Interior

Light, neutral spaces feel calmer and photograph better.

- Open curtains and blinds fully; move furniture away from windows.
- Swap very dark bedding, towels or curtains for lighter, neutral options.
- Use mirrors to bounce light into hallways and smaller rooms.
- Replace tired lampshades or dated fittings and make sure all bulbs match.

If you're repainting, stick to soft whites, greys or beiges. They provide a clean backdrop and help buyers focus on room size and layout.

Focus On Key Rooms

Some rooms do more "selling" than others:

- **Living Room** – Arrange seating to create a clear conversation area. Remove excess side tables and cables; add a throw and cushions for softness.
- **Kitchen** – Clear worktops, leaving perhaps a coffee machine or a plant. Deep-clean sinks, grout and appliances; swap worn-out handles if needed.
- **Bedrooms** – Make beds neatly with simple, coordinated bedding. Keep floors clear and bedside tables tidy.
- **Bathrooms** – Hide everyday bottles, set out fresh towels and a simple plant or candle, and make sure sealant and grout are clean.

A staged home doesn't have to be perfect – just obviously clean, ordered and easy to understand on a quick viewing.



Add Modern Touches And Lifestyle Zones

Today's buyers often look for efficiency and lifestyle as well as space.

- A visible smart thermostat or a couple of smart plugs hints at lower energy waste and easier control.
- Include a few eco-friendly touches – plants, natural fabrics, LED bulbs – to tap into sustainability concerns.
- Use furniture to suggest zones: a compact desk and chair as a home-office corner; a reading chair and lamp as a "wellness" nook; a small table and chairs outside to show how the garden or balcony works for relaxing or entertaining.

You're helping buyers picture how they would use the space day to day.

Stage For All The Senses

Little details can make the house feel welcoming:

- Air rooms before viewings and avoid strong cooking smells.
- Use light, neutral scents – fresh flowers or a reed diffuser – rather than overpowering plug-ins.

- Add soft textures with rugs, cushions and throws.
- Keep any background music gentle and unobtrusive.

The aim is a calm, inviting atmosphere that encourages viewers to linger and talk about where their furniture would go.

Thoughtful staging doesn't have to be expensive or extreme, but it can help your home stand out in photos and in person. If you're thinking of selling and want to see how presentation, pricing and your mortgage options all fit together, get in touch and an adviser will be able to talk through your plans.

Source Data

[1] Featherington Interiors – The Ultimate Home Staging Checklist For UK Sellers In 2025

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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