Dental & Medical Financial Services
1 Market Square, Horsham,
West Sussex RH12 1EU

T: 01403 780 770
F: 01403 780 771
E: info@dentalandmedical.com
W: www.dentalandmedical.com

First mortgage, made simple: A step-by-step guide

Your first mortgage journey

Buying your first home is a major financial step, and the mortgage process can feel unfamiliar at first. There are new terms to understand, documents to prepare and decisions to make before you can move from viewing properties to holding the keys.

The good news is that the process becomes much easier when you break it down into clear stages. A first mortgage is not just about finding a rate. It is about working out what is affordable, choosing the right type of deal and making sure the lender is comfortable with both your finances and the property.

Checking what you can afford

The first step is to understand how much you may be able to borrow. Lenders usually look at your income, regular spending, debts, credit commitments, credit history and deposit size before deciding what may be affordable.

It is also important to think about what feels comfortable month to month. A lender may offer a certain amount, but your own budget should also allow for bills, insurance, food, transport, home maintenance and savings. This is especially important when moving from renting or living with family into full homeownership.

Building your deposit

Your deposit is the amount you contribute towards the property purchase. The rest is usually covered by the mortgage. For example, if you buy a property for £240,000 and have a £24,000 deposit, you would need a mortgage for the remaining £216,000.

The size of your deposit affects your loan-to-value, often called LTV. This is the percentage of the property value that you borrow. A lower LTV can sometimes open up more mortgage options, but many first-time buyers still apply with smaller deposits, depending on their circumstances and lender criteria.

Getting ready before viewing

Before you start making offers, it can help to gather the information a lender is likely to need. This may include payslips, bank statements, proof of deposit, identification, address history and details of any credit commitments.

Many buyers also choose to get an Agreement in Principle. This is not a final mortgage offer, but it can give you a clearer idea of your potential borrowing range. It may also help estate agents and sellers see that you are a serious buyer.

Choosing a mortgage deal

Once you have a clearer budget, the next step is choosing the right mortgage type. Many

Dental & Medical Financial Services
1 Market Square, Horsham,
West Sussex RH12 1EU

T: 01403 780 770
F: 01403 780 771
E: info@dentalandmedical.com
W: www.dentalandmedical.com

first-time buyers prefer a fixed-rate mortgage because the monthly payment stays the same for an agreed period, which can make budgeting easier.

Other options may include tracker or variable-rate mortgages, where payments can change over time. The right choice depends on how much certainty you want, how long you expect to stay in the property and whether you would be comfortable if monthly payments increased.

Making the full application

After your offer on a property is accepted, you can make a full mortgage application. At this point, the lender will assess your finances in more detail and check whether the property is suitable security for the mortgage.

The lender will usually arrange a valuation. This is mainly for the lender's benefit and is different from a full survey. You may still want to arrange your own property survey so you have a better understanding of the home's condition before committing fully.

Receiving your mortgage offer

If the lender is satisfied with your application, valuation and supporting documents, they can issue a formal mortgage offer. This confirms how much they are prepared to lend, the terms of the mortgage and the conditions attached.

At this stage, your solicitor or conveyancer will continue with the legal work. This includes searches, contract checks and preparing for exchange and completion. Once everything is ready, contracts can be exchanged and a completion date can be agreed.

Moving forward with confidence

A first mortgage can feel like a lot to take in, but each stage has a clear purpose. The lender wants to check affordability and property suitability, while you need to feel confident that the mortgage works for your budget and plans.

It is worth taking advice early, especially if your income is variable, your deposit is smaller, you have credit commitments, or you are unsure which mortgage type suits you. The right support can help you prepare properly, avoid delays and make decisions with more confidence. ■

Taking your first step onto the property ladder can feel easier with the right guidance

A mortgage adviser can help you understand your borrowing position, prepare your documents and compare options before you apply. To discuss your mortgage options in more detail, please speak to us.