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# BECOME A SUPERHERO

## IN THE EYES OF YOUR FAMILY

When he was younger one of my son's favourite questions was; *"if you could have any super power, what would it be?"* He loved the idea of being a Superhero.

I think, deep down, we all like the idea of being a Superhero. Being able to do things others can't; amazing things to help those around you.

Now I can't grant you any super powers (sorry) but I can help you do something amazing to help those you love. Best of all there's no need to be bitten by a radioactive spider, hit by a strange space mist, or hail from a different planet.

And there's no need to be a heroic billionaire looking to save the city with an arsenal of high-tech gadgets. No, your new super powers are just going to need a little money.

How do these powers sound to you?

- If you die unexpectedly for any reason your family has the mortgage paid off, or there's a lump sum available to help them out
- If you are struck down with a serious illness and need to take time off work, someone else pays the bills - and maybe they clear the mortgage too
- If you have an accident and break a bone (maybe whilst fighting crime?) someone pays money into your bank account to help ease the financial pain a little

Now, I know it's not like you can stop a bullet, or run faster than the speed of sound, but they're still pretty useful powers for your family.

Best of all, there's no need to pay for them in one go. You can rent your super powers for just a little each month. In fact, you might be surprised how little it could cost to become a superhero.

**To find out more about our range of personal and family protection insurance, please get in touch.**

*Please note - we can't guarantee any form of comic book franchise off the back of your new powers, nor can we promise your new powers will make you "cool" with your kids. We'd also not recommend actually trying to fight crime.*





# Home improvement

Whether you're renovating your home because it's too expensive to move, or you've only just bought the place and you're keen to make your mark, it's important to stick to jobs that will add value rather than risk reducing its future sale price.

Before you embark on improving your home, follow our tips to help make sure you focus on jobs that will add value if and when you come to sell:

## Check your deeds

There may be restrictions on what you can do and you may need planning permission - especially if the changes affect a boundary or your property's external appearance.

## Avoid removing bedrooms

You may want to knock down a wall and convert that box bedroom into a large ensuite, but a three-bedroom semi-detached is naturally going to sell for more than a two-bed.

## Be commercially-minded

Consider the neighbourhood you live in and the types of buyers likely to want to live there. Spending money re-landscaping your garden and laying turf and borders may not appeal to a younger professional couple who just want low-maintenance outside space for entertaining.

## Avoid personalisation

Unless you are prepared to redecorate when you come to sell, try and use neutral colours on walls and doors. You can always introduce bold, bright or dark colours in soft furnishings and ornaments to achieve the effect you want.

## Check the paperwork

If you're looking at a bigger undertaking such as converting your loft into a bedroom, make sure you have the correct paperwork and certification, otherwise the money you spend may not be realised in the sale price.

## Hire a professional

Avoid a DIY disaster by only taking on projects you are confident you can complete.

## Check your policy

If you're going to make any major changes to your home you should contact your buildings and contents insurance provider first to avoid unintentionally invalidating your policy. And make sure your policy covers you for accidental damage caused during your DIY efforts.

## Top 10 DIY nightmares:

1. Woodchip wallpaper
2. Mirrored ceilings
3. Carpeted bathrooms
4. Ugly blinds
5. Fake beams
6. Outside toilet
7. Artex ceilings
8. Internal stone cladding
9. Beaded curtains in doorways
10. External stone cladding

## Top 10 DIY dreams:

1. Interior redecoration
2. Flooring replaced
3. New bathroom
4. Garden makeover
5. New kitchen
6. New boiler/  
central heating system
7. Double glazing / new windows
8. New shed or garden building
9. Exterior redecoration
10. Better insulation



**If you're looking to fund your home renovations please speak to us for advice.**

# The value of protection advice

Protection should be considered as the foundation of all financial planning. After all, if things go awry and you suddenly find yourself in dire financial straits, who or what could you rely on to keep you and your family afloat?

Yet many of us are still reluctant to take out protection insurance, either because we think we can't afford it, or we believe "it won't happen to me". And if you're one of the millions of people living with a medical condition, you might think you've no chance of finding a policy that suits you.

## The facts about ill health

4 million people in the UK are living with diabetes, 7 million with a heart condition and an estimated one in two people will be diagnosed with cancer during their lifetime, but the majority of people in all these cases won't have protection in place.

Even if you're in good health, a loss of income due to illness, injury or death could hit you hard – especially if you have loved ones who rely on you. So, if you don't have protection in place, the question is, do you believe the support you'd receive from the government and / or your employer would see you through the financial impact of lost income due to ill health or the death of a partner? Or perhaps you'll rely on your savings to pay the mortgage and bills and keep your fingers crossed you'll be back at work before you go into overdraft?

Unfortunately, the reality according to AVIVA's 'Protecting our families report' found that 76% of parents have no financial plan in the event of ill health, with slightly less (68%) unsure whether their family would cope financially with the death of either themselves or their partner. These are worrying numbers, especially when you consider these families will typically have insured their homes, pets and smart phones before thinking of insuring their most important asset - themselves.

**60%**  
of obese people

**60%**  
of type 2 diabetes sufferers

**66%**  
of cancer sufferers

*have no protection insurance in place.*

## We're here to help

That's where we come in. As members of the UK's largest financial adviser network, we can access a panel of protection providers, including specialists that offer affordable protection policies specifically for people with ill health.

We will take the time to get to know you and understand your circumstances and objectives. We can help you set out your financial needs and find an appropriate way of protecting them, whatever your circumstances.

**Please get in touch  
to find out more.**





# The cost of retirement

**How much money do you think you'll need to receive each year of your retirement?**

**According to the investment manager Schroders, working people in the UK aged 55 and over believe this figure would equate to 66% of their current income, but the reality according to UK retirees is actually 53%.**

Despite the 13% shortfall, the majority of retired people (92%) felt their retirement income was sufficient. This may not come as a surprise if we consider they are likely to be part of the baby boomer generation and therefore enjoy significant wealth compared to future generations of retirees who quite possibly won't have the benefit of a final salary pension plan.

It might also be the reason that these pensioners can afford to invest one fifth of their retirement income, with the aim of further improving living standards later in life - putting money away for potential care costs, or perhaps boosting their estate for the benefit of their descendants.

## Saving more

The fact remains, however, that expectations can often differ from reality; creating a potential shock in store when you reach retirement. In its report, for instance, Schroders found that while people of working-age might expect to spend 38% on living costs in retirement, the figure is closer to 53%.

It's clear that the more you save, the more comfortable your retirement (subject to the usual investment ups and downs of course). And when it comes to making investment decisions for retirement, advice is key.

Whether you're early on in your career and just starting to think about putting money aside for retirement, or your last day at work is looming and you're preparing for a new phase in life, the investment and savings decisions you make now can make all the difference to how comfortable you are in your retirement.

**Talk to us to find out more.**

*The value of investments and the income from them may go down as well as up and investors may not get back the amounts originally invested.*



# How to prepare financially for long-term illness

While British life expectancy continues to rise, the same might not be said for the quality of health we could expect to enjoy as we get older, according to a stark warning from The British Heart Foundation. Their analysis suggests the number of people suffering heart attacks and stroke because of a rise in diabetes diagnoses could rise by 29% over the next two decades.

While this could be blamed on worsening lifestyles and a growing obesity problem, demographic changes such as an ageing population mean the number of people with chronic or long-term conditions is also likely to increase. This puts extra strain on the NHS as it tries to keep pace with society while managing the cost pressures this inevitably puts on our health and care system.

And it's not just the NHS that has to foot the bill when it comes to treating ill health. Ask yourself, how would your family cope if they couldn't rely on your income for a long period of time? Could they sustain their hard-earned lifestyle if you were to die suddenly?

## All the same, it won't happen to me...

Unfortunately, the reality of suffering a serious illness or dying suddenly suggests otherwise:

**1 in 2 people in the UK will be diagnosed with cancer in their lifetime**



**Every five minutes someone suffers a stroke in the UK**



**Around 42,000 people under the age of 75 in the UK die from cardiovascular disease every year**



*Critical illness cover or life insurance may not sound like priorities for you, but the financial buffer they can provide at such a difficult time could be invaluable.*

Appropriate protection, such as life or critical illness cover (written in trust) can help you, your business partners or your loved ones avoid financial difficulty at an already traumatic time.

There are three main types of cover that can be invaluable in this situation:

### Income protection

or permanent health insurance, will give you a small salary if you cannot work, which will last until you return to work, retire, die or the policy ends.

### Critical illness insurance

will pay you a tax-free lump sum on the diagnosis of a range of serious (but not fatal) conditions including heart attack or stroke.

### Health insurance

also called private medical insurance, will pay out for the cost of medical treatment required for an illness or injury.

### But insurers never pay out?

If you're put off buying protection because you don't think it will pay out when you need it, think again. According to the Association of British Insurers £5bn was paid out on protection claims in 2017, the equivalent of 98% of all protection claims received during the year.

**For more information on how an insurance policy could help you and your family if you were hit with a long-term illness, please get in touch.**



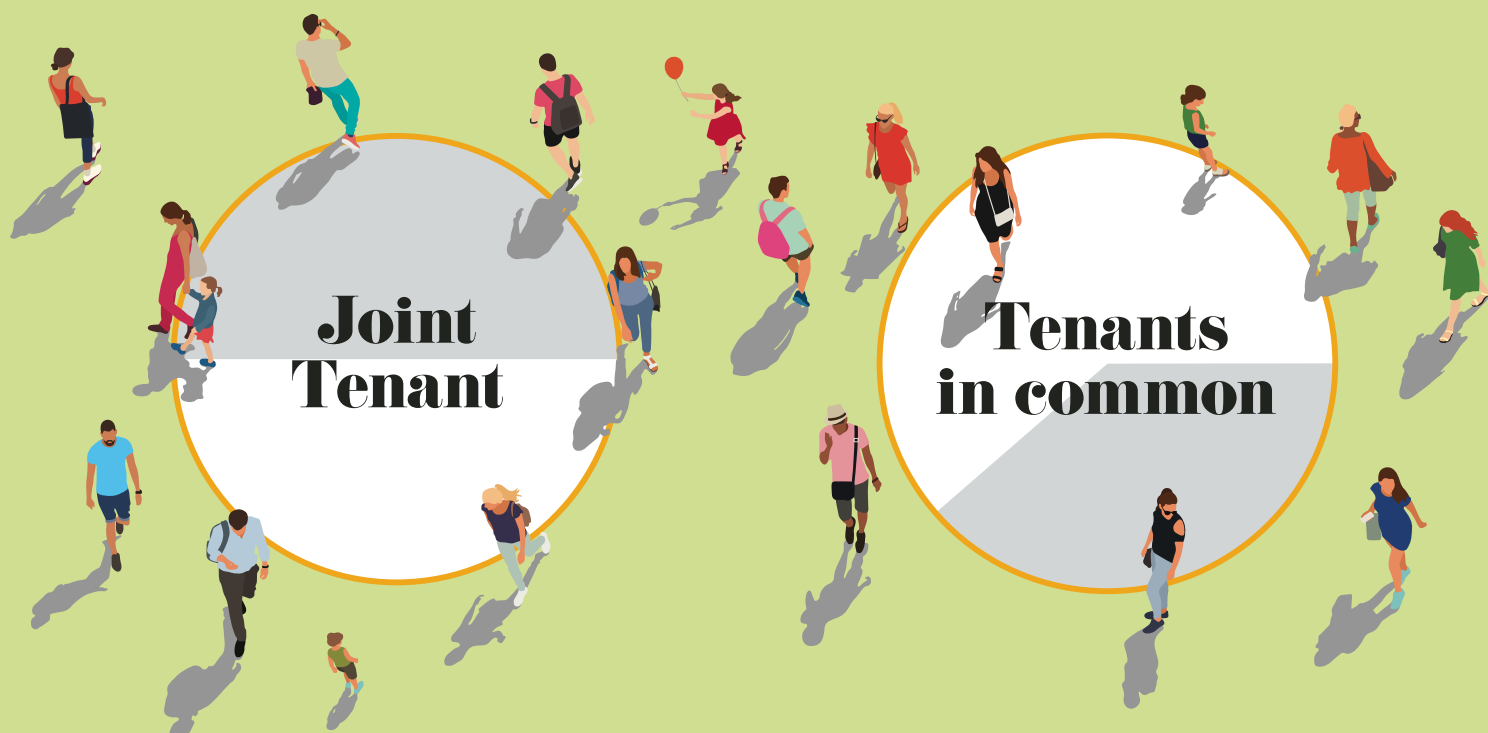
# What life insurance is best for your joint mortgage?

When you take out a mortgage we would always recommend you take out appropriate life insurance too, so that you know your monthly mortgage payments are covered if things go awry.

If you're buying on your own, a single life insurance plan will probably do the trick, but if you're going into joint property ownership, a joint plan may be more appropriate. So, which is best for you?

## Property ownership

When it comes to joint ownership, there are two main types:



Where both individuals each own 50% of the property and have equal rights over it – no matter who contributed what in terms of a deposit. Married couples and those in civil partnerships would typically go into joint tenancy, as it means that if one person dies, their share automatically passes to the other – irrespective of the terms of any will in place.

Where each owns a separate and distinct share of the property (and not necessarily an equal share). This might be the best option for co-habiting (but not married) couples, parents buying for their child, or relatives or friends buying together. This set-up means that if one of the tenants in common dies, their share forms part of their estate, rather than automatically going to the other tenant.

## Single or joint life insurance?

Given the differing types of property ownership, it's important to look at your individual situation before taking out life cover.

A policy taken out on a single life basis covers one person only and will pay out the sum assured if the policyholder dies within the term of the policy. A joint policy covers two lives and will normally pay out on a 'first death' basis, at which point the policy will end. There are pros and cons of both types of cover - and you should seek advice so you know you're getting the cover that's right for you.

## Things to think about

### Budget

One joint insurance life policy could be more affordable than two single life insurance policies.

### Cover

Do you both have exactly the same life insurance need? Would two plans be more appropriate?

### A joint life insurance policy only pays out once

The proceeds could go to the surviving partner (and would be tax-free) so that they could pay off the mortgage. However, they would be left without any life insurance and applying for cover later in life can be expensive.

### Relationship break down

It's possible that the insurance provider would not be able to divide a joint life policy into two single policies. If you have two separate policies, neither will be affected in the event of a split with the joint owner.

**If you need life insurance to protect your mortgage, please talk to us before you buy and we'll advise on cover that's tailored for your circumstances.**

# Shining a light on home insurance

Home and contents insurance seems to be a mystery to many households according to research by the Co-Op, which found more than five million have no cover despite the average value of contents reaching almost £40,000.

## Top 10 regions without contents cover:

North East	31%
Northern Ireland	28%
Wales	25%
London	24%
South East	24%
East Midlands	23%
Yorkshire and The Humber	19%
South West	18%
North West	18%
East Anglia	17%



*On the face of it, this type of insurance seems straightforward. It covers you for the loss of, or damage to, personal possessions in your home; ranging from laptops, TVs and furniture to clothing and jewellery. It's perhaps when you get to the small print that the problems start.*

In fact, 42% of the people surveyed said they find insurance policies confusing and 92% would like insurers to make policies easier to understand. It's easy to see how this confusion could put someone off taking out cover, or prompt them to choose the cheapest policy available. And when you put price before value you risk taking out cover that lets you down when you need it most.

Evidently the insurance industry should do more to make their policies easier to understand, but there are a few steps you can take to make sure you find appropriate, good quality cover that fits your circumstances. If you're confused about the cover you have, or you're about to take out a new policy, these are some of the things we think you should consider:

## Key steps to take

1. Check the insurer's definition of valuables
2. Find out if the policy comes with accidental damage as standard – many don't
3. Don't underinsure, make sure your possessions are covered for the right price and tell your insurer about any particularly valuable items
4. Check if the contents of your garden shed or outbuildings are covered
5. If you live in a flood-risk area, check your insurer's policy on flood damage
6. Check the policy exclusions before signing up
7. Keep your policy up to date to allow for new purchases

**Don't stay in the dark about home insurance. Talk to us for expert, tailored advice.**

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