

Rebuilding First-Time Buyer Confidence: Why Advice Still Matters

West Brom
Building Society

Many first-time buyers are hesitant before applying for a mortgage because of concerns about their past credit history. Even small historic issues can knock confidence and leave people assuming they won't be accepted anywhere.

That's exactly what we saw with Evie and Myles. Because of missed credit card payments in the past, they'd already been discouraged and started to believe that home ownership might not be possible. Their case study is a great reminder of why we believe every story deserves to be looked at properly.

Instead of focusing on credit history alone, we took a more rounded view; looking at how Evie and Myles were managing their finances now, their income stability and overall affordability. With the right context, we were able to support their application and help them take that exciting next step onto the property ladder.

We pair this approach with strong affordability, offering lending of up to **5.75x income, where income is above £60,000 (including combined income), up to 90% LTV**, which can make a real difference for first-time buyers in today's market.

For brokers, our message is simple: don't let your clients self-exclude. If historic credit is a concern, speak to your local BDM or call ISST. Many cases can be discussed with an underwriter before submission, helping build confidence and set everyone up for a smoother journey.

Scan the QR code below to watch the case study video in full.

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For many first-time buyers, the journey to home ownership starts with uncertainty rather than excitement.

We conducted research that reveals a widening confidence gap between the desire to buy and understanding how the mortgage process actually works. Among first-time buyers who recently took out a mortgage with West Brom, over a third felt nervous before applying (36%), almost a third felt overwhelmed (32%), and nearly half said they didn't fully understand the mortgage process (44%).

In today's criteria-driven market, this lack of clarity can quickly become a barrier. What lenders and brokers see repeatedly is an early setback being taken as a final answer. Borrowers who are declined, or advised their options are limited, often disengage before exploring the wider market.

Yet many of these customers are creditworthy. The issue is frequently incomplete information, misunderstood criteria or a surface-level assessment.

One recent case illustrates this clearly. A couple had been advised twice that securing a mortgage would be difficult or would require a higher rate, denting their confidence. A deeper review of their income structure, employment progression and supporting documentation told a very different story. With the right assessment, they were able to proceed with a suitable solution.

As lender criteria evolve, broadening income types, adjusting stress rates and increasing flexibility, the landscape has become more complex. At the same time, many buyers rely on social media or informal advice, where accuracy can be inconsistent. The result is a growing advice gap.

The DIP remains a key area of misunderstanding. Far from being optional, it is a valuable early diagnostic tool. Used well, it sets realistic expectations, highlights documentation needs and gives buyers confidence to search within clear parameters.

Digitisation delivers efficiency, but for first-time buyers especially, a rounded, human assessment remains essential. Clear, jargon-free guidance often marks the moment the process finally makes sense.

Scan the QR code to watch the case study video and see how the right assessment changed the outcome.

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