



## COLD HARD FITNESS

ONE OF THE BEST WAYS TO STAY FIT AND MAINTAIN YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

### 2024 SPORT

LOOKING FORWARD TO THE  
YEAR'S SPORTING CALENDAR

### INDUSTRY OPTIMISM

HOW THE PROPERTY MARKET  
IS SET TO IMPROVE THIS YEAR

### SCREEN ENTERTAINMENT

A LOOK AHEAD TO 2024  
FILM AND TV NOT TO MISS

### WINTER RECIPES

THIS HEALTHY SOUP RECIPE  
WILL WARM THE SOUL

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# HOW THE PROPERTY MARKET IS SET TO IMPROVE IN 2024

Regardless of the COVID 19 pandemic's anxiety-inducing threat to cause a housing crash years on, akin to that of the 2008 financial crash, recent evidence gathered shows that this will, in fact, be highly unlikely to happen. With the economy starting to show significant signs of recovery, the property industry's productivity is beginning to speed up, giving industry professionals reassurance of increased buying and selling activity to come in 2024.

## MORTGAGE RATES EXPECTED TO DROP TO 4.5% BY THE END OF THE YEAR

Many believe house prices are expected to fall further throughout this year, which may help general affordability for some buyers and increase consumer confidence in making larger purchase decisions. But one of the most significant factors that will fundamentally improve productivity within the industry throughout 2024 is the mortgage rates continuing to decrease, which is fantastic news for vendors and landlords alike. As mortgage rates steadily decrease, more Brits are making enquiries with estate agencies across the country, putting an end to a downward trend that has been active since around April last year. According to mortgage data from RightMove, the average interest rate for a two-year fixed mortgage deal decreased from a 6.41% average in August last year to 6.07% by the end of 2023, providing a reassuring indication of the pace at which interest rates have begun to drop.

## WELCOME TO THE LATEST EDITION!

I hope you had a wonderful Christmas, and Happy New Year to you all! Let's get 2024 off to a bang by celebrating everything this new year ahead has to offer.

On pages 2&3 of this month's magazine we kick-off with some property market optimism including all the primary positives concerning the housing market this year, while on pages 4&5 we look at the best European city breaks to book.

Moving through, we all love entertainment, so on pages 6&7 it's a peek at all the big screen, the small screen, and the stage has to offer in the coming months, while pages 12&13 will guide you through all this busy year of sport, including the Euro 24 and the Olympics.

Most of us will have been decidedly

inactive during most of the past Christmas period, which is why a bit of inspiration to get fit again will be a warm welcome. Pages 8&9 will help you with this with a focus on dieting and the benefits of walking, while pages 12&13 feed you some ideas on healthy recipes to compliment that exercise.

Pages 10&11 will look at tips for tender-loving-care of your garden, allowing you that opportunity to burn off even more of those festive calories as well as sit in the sun to enjoy the reward that is your improved and bustling outside space.

So grab a blanket and a hot chocolate, light the fire and cosy up with this month's magazine.

**Daniel Evans**  
Editor





Zoopla's executive director, Richard Donnell, has recently said: "Better news on inflation and the end of base rate increases has provided scope for lenders to start reducing mortgage rates which has supported a modest uptick in demand for homes."

#### CASH BUYERS WILL BE THE BIGGEST COG IN THE PROPERTY WHEEL THIS YEAR

Throughout this year the most dominant buying group in the UK are expected to be cash buyers. As rent rates are likely to increase, first-time buyers will typically be the next in command. Those looking to purchase larger properties are becoming increasingly disillusioned by higher mortgage rates, fees of which are scarier the more expensive the property is. Eradicating this as an option, many would see buying the property outright as a big advantage when thinking about securing their next home, providing, of course, they have the funds readily available. Cash buyers will ultimately support overall sales volumes in the industry. However, it is important to note that the speed of such sales can potentially concern some buyers and prove misleading, since it is still important that all checks be completed to ensure the confidence of the buyer finalising the sale. Conveyancers, surveyors and estate agents are just as important to cash buyers as first time buyers, for instance, as they can help hugely with the process to ensure it gets

navigated in a smooth, professional, and legally-sound manner.

#### PROPOSED RENTERS REFORM BILL

Still under review by Parliament, the upcoming Renters Reform Bill intends to make things much fairer for tenants and landlords alike by setting out a new list of rules and regulations to suit everybody. The proposition is to enforce periodic tenancies as standard, meaning that tenants should give two months' notice to their landlord should they wish to leave, which affords the landlord more time to find another occupant. Alternatively, should the landlord wish to regain possession of the property, they will be able to do so within the strengthened regulations (only in instances where tenants are at serious fault). This proposed new legislation will ultimately mean landlords can possess much greater control over rogue tenants.

#### A RISE IN BTR

This year should see a real improvement in build-to-rent developments, as we have seen an increase in popularity in specially-designed rental communities across the UK over the past four years in particular. For instance, 2022 boasted £4.3 billion in investments in BTR deals alone, with BTR schemes specifically attracting institutional investment seeking a long-term income stream, which are, in turn, used to provide a return for pension funds, or provide a revenue stream for boroughs, facilitating

the instruction of additional new homes to be built.

Renters are more and more finding themselves appreciating the flexibility, affordability, and house maintenance freedom afforded to them within the rental sector, and landlords are understanding this more than ever. Not least because renting within a new build offers a premium experience for renters, including luxury facilities and top-quality customer service. As such, the rent tends to be approximately 11% higher than the UK average rented accommodation. However, bills can often be included in the rent, giving the renter that all-important peace of mind when it comes to budgeting.

**Be prepared: If you find a property you're interested in, be prepared to act quickly. Properties can sell quickly during busy periods so it's important to have everything in order before making an offer.**

**View properties virtually: Many properties now offer virtual viewings which can save you time and make it easier to view multiple properties in a short amount of time.**

**Work with an experienced agent: Working with an experienced agent can help you navigate the busy market and find the right property for you.**

# PLAN YOUR ESCAPE TO THE CITY

If you're already dreaming about your next break away, how about considering a European city break?

## PRAGUE

Nicknamed 'the City of a Hundred Spires', Prague is known for its Old Town Square, the heart of its historic core, with colourful baroque buildings, Gothic churches and the medieval Astronomical Clock, which gives an animated hourly show.

The city is home to a number of famous cultural attractions, many of which survived the violence and destruction of 20th-century Europe. Main attractions include the Prague Castle, the Charles Bridge, Old Town Square, the Jewish Quarter, Petřín hill and Vyšehrad. Since 1992, the extensive historic centre of Prague has been included in the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites.

On your trip why not visit one of the city's ten major museums, along with the numerous theatres, galleries, cinemas and other historical exhibits.

## LONDON

The capital and most populous city of England, London, stands on the River Thames and has been a major settlement for two millennia. It was founded by the Romans, who named it Londinium.

A leading global city in numerous areas such as the arts, commerce, fashion and tourism, London is the world's most-visited city, as measured by international arrivals and has the world's largest city airport system, measured by passenger traffic.

## PARIS

After London, Paris is the second largest metropolitan area in the European Union and is especially known for its museums and architectural landmarks: the Louvre was the most visited art museum in the world in 2016, with 7.4 million visitors while the Musée d'Orsay and Musée de l'Orangerie are noted for their collections of French Impressionist art.

Popular landmarks in the centre of the city include the Cathedral of Notre Dame de Paris and The Gothic royal chapel of Sainte-Chapelle, both on the Île de la Cité; the Eiffel Tower, constructed for the Paris Universal Exposition of 1889; the Grand Palais and Petit Palais, built for the Paris Universal Exposition of 1900; the Arc de Triomphe on the Champs Elysees.

In 2015 Paris received 22.2 million visitors, making it one of the world's top tourist destinations.





## AMSTERDAM

With a population of approximately 7 million, Amsterdam's name derives from Amstelredamme, indicative of the city's origin around a dam in the river Amstel. In the 19th and 20th centuries the city expanded, and many new neighborhoods and suburbs were planned and built. The 17th-century canals of Amsterdam are on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

Famous Amsterdam residents include the diarist Anne Frank, artists Rembrandt van Rijn and Vincent van Gogh, and philosopher Baruch Spinoz

The city's main attractions include its historic canals, the Rijksmuseum, the Van Gogh Museum, the Stedelijk Museum, Hermitage Amsterdam, the Anne Frank House and the Amsterdam Museum.

## VIENNA

Vienna, the capital and largest city of Austria, is located in the eastern part of Austria and is close to the borders of the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary. In 2001, the city centre was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site and in July 2017 it was moved to the list of World Heritage in Danger.

The city, apart from being regarded as the City of Music

because of its musical legacy, is also said to be 'The City of Dreams' because it was home to the world's first psychoanalyst – Sigmund Freud.

## EDINBURGH

Edinburgh is home to the Scottish Parliament and the seat of the monarchy in Scotland. It's also the second largest financial centre in the UK and the city's historical and cultural attractions have made it the UK's second most popular tourist destination, attracting over one million overseas visitors each year.

The city is home to national institutions such as the National Museum of Scotland, the National Library of Scotland and the Scottish National Gallery and is also famous for the Edinburgh International Festival and the Fringe Festival, the latter being the world's largest annual international arts festival.

Historic sites in Edinburgh include Edinburgh Castle, Holyrood Palace, the churches of St. Giles, Greyfriars and the Canongate, and the extensive Georgian New Town, built in the 18th century. Both Edinburgh's Old Town and New Town are listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.



# THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT!

## A snapshot of what to watch in 2024

Something old, something new, something borrowed... well we don't need to go any further with that one. However, the well-worn saying doesn't only apply to the popular wedding tradition for the bride's big day - this year it also fits the entertainment industry where a diet of sequels, prequels and re-imaginings will keep us rivetted to our TVs or flooding to the cinema or theatre. So, what have we got to look forward to?

### BIG SCREEN

Several films, pencilled in for release late last year, were delayed by the Hollywood actors' strike and have been shuffled into an already crowded schedule for this year.

Which means in March, we will finally get to see the second instalment of *Dune*, Denis Villeneuve's sprawling version of Frank Herbert's sci-fi classic that sees Timothée Chalamet as Paul Atreides trying to unite a group of disparate galactic empires.

Christopher Walken, Lea Seydoux and Austin Butler join the cast for more sand, special effects and sandworms.

Also held back was *Drive-Away Dolls*, a road comedy directed by Ethan Coen, one half of the directorial brothers who brought us *Fargo*, *The Big Lebowski* and *No Country For Old Men*. Led by a pair of relatively unknowns, Margaret Qualley and Geraldine Viswanathan, the supporting cast is led by Matt Damon and Pedro Pascal, and it should be with us next month.

Hollywood's obsession with turning best-selling novels

into big box-office smashes continues with *It Ends With Us*, an adaptation of Colleen Hoover's 2016 best-seller which spawned the obvious sequel, *It Starts With Us*. Former *Gossip Girl* star Blake Lively takes the lead for a film which opens next month.

Ones to look out later this month include *Sometimes I Think About Dying*, which was a big hit at the Sundance Festival, and *Mean Girls: The Musical*, dubbed as "the movie adaptation of a musical adaptation of a movie adaptation of a book". Thank you, Tina Fey. Proving you can have enough of a good thing are *Kung Fu Panda 4* (March), *Ghostbusters: Frozen Empire* (March), *Godzilla x Kong: The New Empire* (April), *Kingdom Of The Planet Of The Apes* (May), *Bad Boys 4* (June), *Despicable Me 4* (July), *Deadpool 3* (July), *Beetlejuice 2* (September), *Venom 3* (November) and *Gladiator 2* (November).

Worthy follow-ups include *Joker: Folie à Deux* (October), while *Alien* (August) gets a re-working courtesy of Fede Alvarez, while the *Mission: Impossible* franchise may - or may not - be concluded with the release of *Dead Reckoning - Part 2*, currently scheduled for the summer.

### SMALL SCREEN

Television executives also seem reluctant to let go of a good thing but do so they must with *Stranger Things*, which will return for its fifth and final season on Netflix later in the year. And while season four closed on a cliff-hanger, you might be reaching for the tissues when this one concludes.

Hardly surprisingly given its status as the biggest show in Netflix, *Squid Game* gets a second season. For those who missed out first time, it's about a game inflicted on the most debt-ridden people in society. And it will be





compulsive viewing, whenever it will be aired. Also compulsive is *Bridgerton*, back for season three with more balls, tittle-tattle and scene-stealing Regency architecture. This time, it concentrates on the developing love story between Penelope (aka society gossip-monger Lady Whistledown) and Colin Bridgerton. It wouldn't be a new year on TV without Disney+ giving us a *Star Wars* spin-off - this one is *The Acolyte*, set in the Hoth Republic era before the initial trilogy - while another sci-fi hero, Robert Downey Jr, plays a master of disguise in *The Sympathizer*, as show described as part thriller, part satire.

While on sci-fi, *Blade Runner* makes the transition from big to small screen on Prime Video, with Ridley Scott taking the storey on from 2049 to 2099, although a release date has yet to be finalised, while Colin Farrell reprises *The Penguin* for HBO Max. And for those who can remember it last time around - it was only 2016 - there is a second season for *The Night Manager*, the

incredibly classy espionage caper based on the John le Carré novel. It made a star of the returning Tom Hiddleston ... and his derriere.

## STAGE

Film and print continue to spread their influence over the West End stage with the anticipated arrival of two big-screen adaptations of best-selling books. First up is *Minority Report*, a re-working of Philip K Dick's sci-fi master-work where people are imprisoned for crimes they have yet to commit. The play is set in 2050s London and will open at the Lyric, Hammersmith in April.

Later in the year, a musical version of *The Devil Wears Prada*, a waspish look at life in a New York fashion magazine, makes it debut at the Dominion Theatre in October. With a soundtrack by Sir Elton John, it should be a hot ticket.

An honorary mention goes to *Dear England*, the play which centres around Gareth Southgate's plans to ensure football came home in the 2020 European Championship. It's bound to get crowds heading to the Prince Edward Theatre, bearing in mind he'll have another go in June.



# ARE DIETS ALL THEY'RE CRACKED UP TO BE?

One in ten Brits will make New Year's resolutions. Many will have dieting at the top of their lists but, do diets actually work?

Despite the lure of 'quick fix' diets and their promise of helping us lose weight fast, studies have shown that approximately three in ten people admitted they were likely to have given up their challenge within the first quarter of the year. A sigh of relief perhaps, having realised you're not the only one who will return to old habits once the weight has been lost? There are, however, many ways to rid yourself of that post-Christmas tum and banish yoyo dieting for good.

## EXERCISE IS KEY

Now, I'm not one for stepping outside my house, let alone digging out those old running shoes. However, getting your heart racing and body moving is a fantastic way to keep the weight off. Get yourself joined up to your local gym. Or, even better, find some time throughout the day to exercise in the comfort of your own home.

## HEALTHY EATING

Healthy eating doesn't mean you are forced into a life of nothing but dry salad. Where possible, swap those unhealthy high-calorie meals or snacks for healthier alternatives and eat everything in moderation and you'll help keep the weight off. Unfortunately that means late night takeaways might have to become a less regular occurrence!

Once you've made a change, stick to it. We're all guilty of it, choosing that take away over home cooking after a long day at work. But once

you've decided on the changes you're going to make, stick to them. Inevitably your weight will stabilise, but remember, in order to maintain the new you, you will need to continue with the changes you have made, and that's achieved through simple discipline.

## TOP TIPS

Swap unhealthy foods for healthier options. Reduce the amount of fat in your diet by replacing certain foods with healthier alternatives, such as low-fat spreads and yogurts.

Breakfast is the most important meal of the day. Eating breakfast will help stop you getting too hungry and snacking later on. If you do feel the need for a snack mid-morning there are plenty of healthy options available such as fruit or a handful of unsalted nuts.

Exercise is key. If you're not used to regular exercise, start off slow and steady, gradually building up your stamina.

Keep track of your weight. Weigh yourself regularly, that way you'll know of any changes. But don't get disheartened if you have not lost as much as you want: it's far better to lose weight slowly, as you are more likely to keep to plan and maintain your weight.

Be realistic. Set yourself obtainable targets and be realistic with the changes you make to your diet and fitness.





# THE MANY UNDERRATED BENEFITS OF WALKING

Just like any other form of cardiovascular exercise, walking can help you lose weight, strengthen your heart, and relieve stress

**W**alking is easy, free, convenient, and leisurely, which is why there is no reason it shouldn't be incorporated into your everyday routine. Studies have shown that a simple 30-minute walk five days a week can help you enjoy a longer and healthier life. They also determined that the energy used for both walking and running results in similar reductions in risk for high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, heart disease, and cancer risk, meaning walking at a moderate intensity can get the job done just as well as running, providing it's practiced regularly enough. But there are many other benefits to walking too.

## MENTAL HEALTH

Studies have shown that walking can increase creative output productivity by an average of 60%. The science shows that engaging in activities that allow our minds to wander encourages a mental state conducive to innovative ideas. The act of walking is also a proven mood booster; it can help reduce anxiety, depression, and eradicate negative moods. It can also improve self-esteem and reduce symptoms of social withdrawal.

## CALORIES

There are approximately 3,500 calories in a pound of body fat, which means taking brisk walks – without any changes in your diet – can help you drop as much as a pound a week.

## JOINT PAIN

It's natural to assume rest is the best for joint pain, but in fact the opposite is the ideal remedy. Walking can help protect your knees, hips, and other joints because it helps lubricate and strengthen the muscles that support them. Walking also may benefit people living with arthritis, and indeed prevent it from forming.

## IMMUNE FUNCTION

Walking may reduce your risk of catching a cold or the flu, and further studies have discovered that walking for 30 to 45 minutes a day granted 43% fewer sick days and fewer upper respiratory tract infections overall for individuals.







# HOW TO CARE FOR, AND GET THE BEST OUT OF YOUR GARDEN

Even during winter, your garden still needs your care and attention if it is to be at its best in spring. So, here's how to keep the love you have for your garden as warm as can be.

**Y**our garden of late has not been up to a great deal. Can you blame it after what was one of the hottest UK summers on record? Regardless, it needs its rest anyway if it wants to be at its best for the spring months; because that's when your garden really shines. But there are still some important things you will need to do to maintain your garden's health and ability to produce the goods come March. Here are our top tips on how to give your garden the TLC it deserves...

## WEEDING, PRUNING AND RAKING

Though inevitable, weeds are a gardener's arch nemeses. Getting them under control can be time-consuming; but the more you manage them, the easier and quicker it will become to get rid of them. A good tip is using approximately two inches of mulch in your garden. This should not only retain moisture for your plants but will also suffocate weeds and prevent them from growing.

Your garden needs regular pruning, particularly any fruit trees, overgrown hedges and buds. Trimming the excess growth right down to their base will make your garden look neater and create more space for your garden life to grow and flourish.





Since autumn has just passed us, what better time to clean up all those leaves that have fallen onto your lawn and plants. Get the rake out, gather them all up, and make your garden tidy again.

### COVER YOUR PLANTS

Covering your plants before nightfall arrives each day will mean protection against some of the coldest temperatures of the entire year. Do so before dusk as if you wait until darkness falls, most of the stored heat in your garden will have dissipated. When covering your plants, try not to leave any openings for the warmth to escape.

When dawn breaks and the frost has thawed, remove the covers in good time. Delaying doing this could cause the plant to break dormancy and start actively growing again; which would make it even more susceptible to frost damage.

For this job you could use bed sheets or

blankets, drop cloths, or even an inverted flower pot or bucket.

### PLANTING/PRUNING HEDGES AND FLOWERS

Winter is the perfect time to plant hedges and bare-rooted trees, because by the time spring comes around, they will really start to grow and develop. Lining your garden with hedges may mean the world of difference in terms of enclosed privacy in the warmer months, or it could just mean encasing your garden with a wonderfully attractive border.

Pruning various growths in your garden such as Wisteria, Clematis, Cornus, Salix cultivars, Winter Flowering Jasmine and summer side-shoots, will do the world of good for when spring and summer come around.

One particularly handy tip is to remove any faded flowers from your winter pansies to stop them from setting seed and encourage a flush of new flowers for the warmer months ahead.

# START YOUR YEAR THE RIGHT WAY

This super easy, quick and healthy one-pot is packed with white fish fillets, king prawns, a rich tomato sauce and enough veg to count as three of your five a day. Perfect for kicking off the new year on track!

## SIMPLE FISH STEW

Prep 10 minutes | Cooking 20-25 minutes | Serves 2

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tsp fennel seeds
- 2 carrots
- 2 celery
- 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 2 leeks
- 400g can chopped tomatoes
- 500ml hot fish stock
- 2 skinless pollock fillets (about 200g), thawed if frozen, and cut into chunks
- 85g raw shelled king prawns

### METHOD

Heat the oil in a large pan; add the fennel seeds, carrots, celery and garlic, and cook for 5 minutes until starting to soften.

Tip in the leeks, tomatoes and stock, season and bring to the boil, then cover and simmer for 15-20 minutes until the vegetables are tender and the sauce has thickened and reduced slightly.

Add the fish, scatter over the prawns and cook for 2 more minutes until lightly cooked. Ladle into bowls and serve!

You can find this recipe, and more, at <https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/simple-fish-stew>





# WARM UP THIS WINTER

## SPICY BAKED BEAN SOUP

Ready in 30 mins | Suitable for Vegetarians | Serves 4

### INGREDIENTS

Low calorie cooking spray  
400g frozen mixed onions, carrots and celery (or 200g each  
frozen chopped onions and frozen sliced carrots)  
2 tsp dried basil or mixed herbs  
750ml boiling vegetable stock  
2 x 415g cans baked beans in tomato sauce  
1 tbsp Tabasco sauce (chipotle flavour if possible) or to taste  
Chopped fresh or frozen parsley, to serve

### METHOD

Spray a large non-stick saucepan with low-calorie cooking spray and place over a low heat. Add the frozen vegetables, dried herbs, 3 tbsp water and a little seasoning. Cover and cook for ten minutes, or until soft.

Add the stock and baked beans and bring to a simmer, then cover again and cook for 15 minutes. Remove from the heat and leave to cool slightly.

Ladle half of the soup into a food processor or liquidiser, blend until smooth and stir back into the pan. Bring back to a gently simmer, stir in the Tabasco and sprinkle with the parsley to serve.

*Fancy adding meat to the dish? Cook 4-6 Slimming World Syn-free pork sausages according to the pack instructions, slice thinly and add them for the last five minutes of the cooking time.*



# GAMES ON!

## Olympics and Euro 24 spearhead a busy year of sport

**B**race yourselves, it's going to be a tough summer. In a feat of endurance and perseverance more associated with ultra-marathon runners, armchair sports fans will be able to gorge themselves on an absolute feast of action midway through the year.

Because within 12 days of football's Euro 24 Championships closing in Germany, the Olympic flame will be lit in Paris to officially start the greatest show on Earth. And, of course, during that brief hiatus, there will be the annual staples such as the Tour de France, Wimbledon and The Open golf.

Throw in the Paralympics, Solheim Cup, the ICC World T20 cricket championships for men and women, America's Cup sailing and the World Rowing Championships and it's a busy year by any standards.

### GOING FOR GOLD

First to Paris for the Games of the XXXIII Olympiad (July 24th to August 11th). A few handball, football and rugby matches will have been played before the official opening on the 26th signals the start of 19 days of full-on competition around the streets of the French capital, whose iconic landmarks will be transformed to feature among the 35 venues.

Four new sports have been admitted this year – sport climbing, skateboarding, surfing and break dancing – as Paris strives to create an inclusive, gender-balanced and youth-centred Games.

However, it is in the more traditional sports that TeamGB are expected to do well – in fact, they are projected to win 62 medals, finishing fourth behind the USA, China and the host nation in the medal table. Which is no mean achievement as, before London 2012 when they won 65, Great Britain failed to reach 60 in the previous 100 years.

Since Lottery funding kicked in, though, their stock has risen considerably with 67 in Rio 2016, and 64 in Tokyo, and this time there are real prospects on the track where they failed to strike gold in Japan.

Should they remain uninjured, the likes of Katarina Johnson-Thompson (heptathlon), Keely Hodgkinson (800m), Josh Kerr and Jake Wightman (men's 1500m), Dina Asher-Smith (200m), Laura Muir (women's 1500m), Matthew Hudson-Smith (400m), Zharnell Hughes (100m) and Ben Pattison (800m) are expected to make the podium.

When you add the likes of swimmers Adam Peaty (100m breaststroke), Tom Dean and Matt Richards (200m freestyle); gymnasts Jake Jarman, Max Whitlock, and Jessica Gadirova; trampoline world champion Bryony Page; skateboarder Sky Brown; BMX star Bethany Shriever plus relays and rowing, eventing, cycling team events, there is every reason to anticipate a bright golden haze over the Champs Elysees.

Four new sports have been admitted this year – sport climbing, skateboarding, surfing and break dancing

### GOING FOR GOALS

As it's the halfway point between World Cups, football's focus is shared between four continental blockbusters that are harder to win than the global showpiece. The year starts with the Africa Cup of Nations in the Ivory Coast (January 13th – February 11th), and the Asian Cup (Qatar, January 12th-February 10th) followed by the Copa America (United States, June 14th – July 13th) and the European Championships (Germany, June 14th – July 14th).

England go into the Euros as one of the favourites, particularly after landing a favourable group draw. However, tournaments rarely go smoothly, so expect a few anxious moments during a Group C campaign that starts on June 16th against Serbia, with games against Denmark (20th) and Slovenia (25th) to follow.

It is imperative they top the group and face the third-placed team from either Groups D, E or F in the last 16. Should they finish second, they will face the winners of Group A – Germany, Switzerland, Hungary ... or Scotland.

The Tartan Army set the ball rolling with the opening game





## KEY EVENTS AT A GLANCE

- 12 to Feb 10 – Asia Cup (football)
- 13 to Feb 11 – Africa Cup of Nations (football)
- 15 to 28 – Australian Open (tennis)

2 to 18 – World Aquatics Championships (swimming, diving)  
2 to Mar 16 – Six Nations Championship (rugby union)

20 to June 9 – French Open (tennis)

- 4 to 30 – ICC Men's World T20 (cricket)
- 14 to July 13 – Copa America (football)
- 14 to July 14 – Euro 24 (football)
- 29 to July 21 – Tour de France (cycling)

- 1 to 14 – Wimbledon (tennis)
- 18 to 21 – The Open Championship (golf)
- 25 to Aug 11 – The Olympic Games (multi-sports)

18 to 25 - World Championships (rowing)  
28 to Sept 8 – Paralympic Games (multi-sports)  
26 to Sept 8 – US Open (tennis)

10 to 15 – Solheim Cup (golf)  
TBC – ICC Women's World T20 (cricket)

10 to 15 – FINA World Championships (swimming, short course)





North Street, Kings Lynn

£375,000



Superb, very well presented, three bedroom, modern terrace house situated within the sought after historic village of Castle Acre. With delightful gardens, the property has a modern yet cosy feel and is conveniently situated within easy reach of all the village has to offer.

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### Chantry Lane, Swaffham

**OIEO £525,000**



An extremely well presented individual spacious detached four bedroom house with an open outlook to the rear situated in the popular well serviced village of Necton. The property has much to offer and included en-suite bathroom, garden room and 2 reception rooms.

SWAFFHAM - 01760 721389 - [info@longsons.co.uk](mailto:info@longsons.co.uk)

### Lee Warner Road, Swaffham

**£425,000**



Stunning, extremely well presented, spacious detached four bedroom house. This fantastic property boasts three reception rooms, kitchen/breakfast room, utility room, luxury en suite shower room, luxury four piece bathroom suite, double garage, parking for several vehicles and gas central heating!

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## Donthorn Cottage, Campingland

**OIRO £425,000**



LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION! You can't beat this picturesque spot, it's in an easy and convenient proximity to the town, along with its charm, character & modern adaptations and its CHAIN FREE!!...What more would you want! Viewing is highly recommended!

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## Willow House, The Street, Kings Lynn

**£495,000**



Very well presented, spacious, detached modern four bedroom house. This superb property offers four double bedrooms, sizeable rooms throughout, kitchen/dining/family room, en-suite to bedroom one, gardens, parking, UPVC double glazing and oil central heating. OFFERED CHAIN FREE!

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Swaffham - 01760 721389  
Watton - 01953 883474

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## Heron Way, Watton

**£375,000**



Spacious, well presented, detached three bedroom bungalow with garage situated in a cul-de-sac location in the popular town of Watton. This fantastic property offers parking for several vehicles, conservatory, UPVC double glazing (replaced 2021), gardens and gas central heating. NO ONWARD CHAIN

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## Oak Meadow, Thetford

**£300,000**



Superb, modern, extremely well presented detached three bedroom house situated in the well serviced popular village of Shipdham. This fantastic property was built by Abel Homes and amongst many things offers en-suite shower room, two reception rooms, triple glazing, PV panels, garage and parking.

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## Harvey Street, Watton

**£350,000 - £375,000**



Very well presented spacious, detached four bedroom house with double garage situated in a popular area of the market town of Watton. This superb property offers a fitted kitchen, utility, cloakroom, dining room, lounge, conservatory, en suite shower room, well presented gardens and double garage.

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## Setterden, Mere Road, Stow Bedon

**£525,000**



A spacious detached four bedroom house situated on the sought after Mere Road in Stow Bedon. The property offers huge potential, two reception rooms, utility room, cloakroom with WC, bathroom, four car garage, large gardens, ample off road parking, central heating and double glazing. Available chain free!

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Griston Road, Watton

£325,000



NOT TO BE MISSED! An extremely well presented three bedroom detached house situated within the popular town of Watton. The property has been extended to create an amazing family orientated ground floor space with the benefit of an en-suite shower room, gas central heating and UPVC double glazing.

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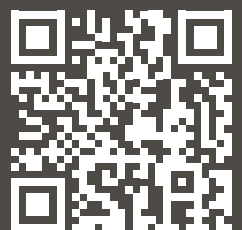
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HOW MUCH  
**IS MY**  
PROPERTY  
WORTH?



# Present your house for sale by de-cluttering...

Maximise your home's potential and create spacious rooms enticing potential buyers – simply by de-cluttering!

“ De-cluttering allows you to... maximise your space, emotionally prepare you to move, and will allow you to focus your buyers on what is important ”

If you are looking to sell your house, or have had your home on the market for a while now, then you probably want to get the maximum sale price in the quickest time. There are a few things you can't control – but the one thing that is in your control, is the look and feel of the interior and exterior.

While it's worth spending time fixing and cleaning your house before potential buyers come and view, it's also important to de-clutter. This creates spacious rooms and also allows you to decrease and organise your personal items before you move yourself. Of course it's understandable that you don't want spend money, time and energy on a home you are about to leave, however, a lot of people are looking for a house in which they can move straight into. Maintaining your

property might even save you thousands of pounds; it could even reduce added expenses of living in your home whilst waiting for a sale. And it might even help avoid possible reductions in the asking price.

The main reason in which people move house tends to be because they lack space in their current home. They want a home that is spacious and in which they can grow into. If a potential viewer comes to your home and sees that there is lack of space, then this will turn them away.

De-cluttering allows you to remove any unnecessary items in an untidy or overcrowded place. It will help maximise your space, emotionally prepare you to move, and will allow you to focus your buyers on what is important.





So where should you start?

You need to create a great first impression and focus on the rooms themselves. You will notice that the first things you see in each room are personal items. Where possible you want to create the look of a

them into things you want to keep and things you want to get rid of. You may even find that you have collected a cupboard full of paper work. Get yourself organised! Don't just throw it all away, but file it and go through it thoroughly. This will also make it easier when you move.

De-personalising can also be a great way to de-clutter. Too many personal effects can be distracting to buyers. They want to see a house in which they can make their own memories rather than seeing yours. Again, personal items can be stored away. Remember

“ Where possible you want to create the look of a lifestyle that the potential buyers want ”

lifestyle that the potential buyer want. This usually has a 'show home' feel, rather than a 'lived in' feel. Minimising your things is the quickest way to do this: you want to ensure that potential buyers can do simple things, like, open any doors easily, ensuring that there are no obstacles.

So, what do we mean by clutter? There are two types: genuine clutter, and items that you want to keep but don't work for the sale of your property.

Genuine Clutter:

You need to go through the space and sort out each item, categorising

You also want to focus on little things like DVDs, books and trinkets. These items may have some small value so sell them or donate them to charity. Get rid of any old shoes and coats that are lying about in your porch or hallway. You might want to hide away the coats and shoes you do currently wear. Store them in your wardrobe, while you have viewings.

Items that you want to keep but don't work for the sale of your property:

You may want to consider putting some items in storage while you sell your home. Sometimes items are too large or even too small for some spaces and can make the room look odd. If you want to keep these particular items, then store them until you move into your new home.

that this is only a temporary way of living and hopefully it won't be for long! If you find you are keeping more things than you are throwing out, then think about whether or not it's in the right room or do you even need it now?

As previously mentioned, you can attempt to sell some of the things you have acquired over the years. Use sites like eBay, Gumtree and social networking sites to try and sell items. You may want to even hold a house sale for the remaining items that you can't sell. Failing that, why not donate to charity.

The end goal is still the same and it's important to help potential buyers envision your house as theirs. So remember, de-cluttering will make your home more spacious and entice potential buyers!

## Top Tips!

.....

If you are throwing away paperwork, shred anything that is confidential

.....

De-clutter before agents come and take photos of your property. This will help attract more potential viewers online and get that first good impression

.....

Don't spend too long on certain items and don't get distracted. Keep yourself motivated and race against the clock!

.....

Make it fun! Play some music or watch TV while you de-clutter

.....





# Your step-by-step guide to the conveyancing process

Once a sale has been agreed and is in the hands of your solicitor, it will go through the following stages. Sometimes additional work will be needed – for example, if the property is leasehold or is yet to be registered with the Land Registry. It is also important for buyers to discuss the availability of their deposit with their solicitor early in the transaction, and we strongly recommend that you contact your solicitor regularly so that they can keep you fully up-to-date with the progress and the latest timescales.

## Seller's solicitor's steps

- Obtain a copy of the Title Deeds (or office copies if the title is registered)
- Obtain a copy of the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) (if applicable)
- The seller(s) will return a completed Property Information Form and a Fixtures, Fittings and Contents Form to the solicitors
- Copies of the above documents, plus a draft contract – this is known as an 'Information Pack' – will be sent to the buyer's solicitor
- Answer the buyer's solicitor's additional enquiries (for example, specific questions about fixtures and fittings) and obtain copies of any planning consent documents
- Agree the contract and arrange for the sellers to sign it in readiness of the exchange (below)
- All parties agree completion dates and the contracts are exchanged

## Between exchange and completion

- Obtain redemption figures from the mortgage lender and reply to requisitions on title
- Approve the transfer and arrange for the seller(s) and buyer(s) to sign
- Receive the agent's fee account and seek the seller's consent to settle this out of completion funds

## Completion date

This is the date the ownership of the property passes from the seller to the buyer, and it follows the successful transfer of funds. It's the date that the whole process works towards.

## Upon completion

- Receive completion funds and (only when this has been completed) instruct your estate agent to release the keys to buyers. Redeem mortgage and forward the financial statement. Forward any surplus funds (unless these are being used to fund an onward purchase). Ensure all outstanding bills are paid
- Forward transfer documents and deeds to the buyer's solicitors
- Forward evidence of 'discharge of mortgage' to the buyer's solicitors



## Buyer's solicitor's steps

- Obtain the Information Pack, including a copy of the EPC (if applicable) from the sellers' solicitor and raise any additional queries
- Initiate any specialist searches (for example: a coal search). Submit local, environmental and water searches and a chancel check. This takes about 10 working days in total, and enquiries are then usually raised from the results
- Approve the contract when all enquiries are satisfactory and complete. (At this stage, a mortgage transfer deed will need to be signed and witnessed)
- Receive a mortgage offer and instructions from the lender and deal with any conditions set out by them. Make sure that life cover and buildings insurance is being arranged
- Request the deposit, report back to the buyer, and arrange for the contract to be signed. Place buildings insurance and life cover in force
- All parties agree completion dates and the contracts are exchanged

## Between exchange and completion

- Raise 'requisitions on title' and prepare the draft transfer deed
- Report on title to mortgage lender and obtain funds for completion, including Stamp Duty (if appropriate)
- Prepare accounts, obtain signature to mortgage deed and undertake final Land Registry and Land Charges searches

## Completion date

This is the date the ownership of the property passes from the seller to the buyer, and it follows the successful transfer of funds. It's the date that the whole process works towards.

## Upon Completion

- Forward to the seller's solicitors the balance of funds – it is only then that they can authorise the release of the keys. Receive from the seller's solicitors, the transfer document deeds
- Stamp the Transfer Deed, register the buyer's ownership with the Land Registry and forward the deeds to the lender or client (where appropriate)

**Contract** - The agreement that sets out the main terms that have been agreed – for example: price, address, names, etc. Two copies are drawn up, and each party signs one in readiness for the exchange of contracts.

**Deposit** - The part of the purchase price (usually 10%) which the buyer pays on exchange of contracts.

**Exchange of contracts** - The swapping of signed contracts by the solicitors (together with the buyer's deposit). After this, the contract is binding.

**Energy Performance Certificate** - This contains information on energy use, energy performance, carbon dioxide emissions, and fuel bills.

**Land Registry** - The Government department that records who owns what land, and under what conditions.

**Local Authority Search** - A list of questions that are specific to the property and intended, for example, to discover if there have been any planning applications on the property, if the road to the house is maintained by the council, etc.

**Mortgage Redemption Figure** - The amount required to repay the outstanding capital/ interest of a mortgage.

**Property information form/fixtures, fittings and contents form** - Standard forms about the property that the seller answers for their solicitor (for example: what will be left behind, details of guarantees, etc.)

**Title Deeds** - Legal documents that prove ownership of land/buildings, and the terms on which they are owned.

**Transfer of Title** - The document that passes the ownership from the seller to the buyer.

**Stamp Duty for buy to let investors and second home owners** - An additional tax, paid by the buyer purchasing an additional property that is not their main residence. It includes buy to let landlords and those buying second homes and holiday homes. The higher rates will be 3 percentage points above the current rates of duty shown below.

**Requisition on title** - An enquiry relating to the completion arrangements.

**Seller's Pack** - This comprises a Property Information Form, a Fixtures, Fittings and Contents Form, a copy of the title deeds and the draft contract.

**Stamp Duty** – Currently, the Stamp Duty threshold for residential properties is £250,000. For first-time buyers you can claim a discount and won't pay Stamp Duty up to £425,000 on the purchase price and after that you will pay only 5% between £425,001 to £625,000.

However, how much you pay is also dependent on whether you already own another property or if you're a non-UK resident.



# Moving house?

From meter readings to removal companies, there's so much to remember when moving house. Here's our checklist of what to do and when

**F**irst of all, congratulations on your new home! The excitement has probably now kicked in but moving home can also be one of the most stressful and emotionally draining things you can do. However, careful organisation and planning can help decrease the stress and anxiety of moving. This comprehensive and essential checklist will help you do just that.

## Eight weeks – Research

Ideally, you want to start packing away any non-essential items as early as possible. This includes any items stored away in the loft, garage and shed. If you are not using it, pack it. Looking into your new area is also important, try to do this around eight weeks before you move. You might need to think about transferring your children to different schools and ordering new uniforms too. At this point, ensure you are also documenting all your important information away: that includes contact details, dates, contracts and information regarding your solicitor.

## Six weeks – Removal companies or do it yourself?

Now would be the perfect time to decide on a local removal company. Or if you don't have too much to move, you may want to do it yourself. You could even look into different van hire companies. At this point you've probably started packing away some bits, but if there is anything you decide not to take, then look into selling these items or donating them to charity. This will also give you an idea on the volume of items you have to move.

## Four weeks – Notify utility companies

This would be a good time for you to notify utility companies and inform them about your move to switch over. This includes gas and electricity, council tax, internet, phone rental and TV. You should also consider changing any car insurance, tax, memberships, phone contracts and inform your bank about the move. Now's the time to also arrange a date to have your new house cleaned before you move





“It will be worth packing a night bag each to help everyone settle in, which means you won't have to rummage through everything to find your toothbrush!”

in, and start ordering any new furnishings for your new property. Start packing away more items, that being, out of season clothes, books, dvd's and even bulky items, like TV's that aren't used often.

### Two weeks - Confirm all details

Confirm your move with your removal company or van hire, estate agents and schools. If possible, try to organise someone to look after your pets and children for the day of your move, as this can also be a stressful time for them too. If your removal company doesn't disassemble any furniture or sort out the un-plumbing for the washing machine, then now would be the ideal time to organise these. Remember to also cancel any local services you receive: this could be window cleaners, gardeners and newspaper deliveries. You should now also think about re-registering to vote and getting your post re-directed after your moving date. Continue packing away more furnishings, kitchen appliances and crockery that you won't be using for the next couple of weeks.

### 24 hours - Final check and walk round

You now have only 24 hours before you move, so double check that everything is packed away and ready for transit. It will be worth packing a night bag each to help everyone settle in, which means you won't have to rummage through everything to find your toothbrush! You may want to create an inventory of your boxes and

furniture to help you keep track of what you have and to help you ensure it doesn't go missing.

### Moving day

Today is the day! You need to be ready for when your removal company comes. Ensure that you let them know if there are any fragile boxes that need extra care when handling. If you're moving yourself, then pack up your car or van and work out how many trips it may take. Before you leave, also take note of your final meter readings and send these off to your provider. Don't forget to leave your keys for the new owners!

### You have arrived at your new home!

Give your removal company instructions of which boxes go in which rooms and make sure you are happy with everything that has arrived. Ensure you check for any damage before the movers leave. Read your new utility meters and send your readings of to your supplier. Taking photos of them will also ensure you have the correct reading if you need them again in the future. Unpack your essentials such as bed linen and clean towels. Don't worry about the rest, it isn't going anywhere! Order a takeaway, have a cup of tea and enjoy your first night with your family.

Right, so now you're all moved in, it's time to settle down, unpack and enjoy your new place. Remember, planning is essential to ensure your move runs stress free.

## Checklist

### Eight weeks

- ☐ Pack non-essential items
- ☐ Research your new area (transfer schools and order new uniform)
- ☐ Keep all important documents

### Six weeks

- ☐ Decide on a local removal company
- ☐ Clear out any unwanted items
- ☐ Keep packing

### Four weeks

- ☐ Notify utility companies
- ☐ Start preparation for your new house
- ☐ Keep packing

### Two weeks

- ☐ Finalise all details
- ☐ Organise pet and child care
- ☐ Cancel local services
- ☐ Keep packing

### 24 hours

- ☐ Check every room and ensure everything is packed
- ☐ Pack a night bag so everything is to hand
- ☐ Collect your new keys
- ☐ Make sure your phone is fully charged so you can get in touch with the estate agents or removal company

### Moving in

- ☐ Prepare for the arrival of the removal company and give them directions/your contact details
- ☐ Ensure everything is ready to move
- ☐ Record meter readings

### On arrival

- ☐ Give removal company instructions of what goes where
- ☐ Check for any damage before they leave
- ☐ Read your new utility meters and send them off to your supplier
- ☐ Check if the previous owners have left anything behind
- ☐ Unpack essentials
- ☐ Order a takeaway and sit back and relax!



Want to treat yourself to a proper removal company for your next move or are you prepared to do it yourself

# Removal company or brave it yourself?

**Y**ou're excited about your new home and location but the process of packing, organising and actually moving all of your items is something no-one really ever looks forward to. Not only that but you also have to contact utility companies, maintain a job, keep your children happy and clean your entire house. You do have super powers, right?

## Removal companies

Unless you live in a small property or flat, it could be worth hiring a professional removal company to help relieve some of the stress on the day. They have many skills and experience and some of the services they can provide include packing and

unpacking, dismantling and assembling furniture, loading your belongings quickly and securely, including those fragile and specialist items. They can even supply you with packing materials.

Hiring a removal company will also allow you the time to collect the keys to your new home. You also won't have to worry about the exhausting physical side of things, that being carrying boxes back and forth. Some services are great if you don't have much time to plan and get these done yourself; however these do often come at a premium and may not be suitable for those on a budget. When choosing a removal company

You also won't have to worry about the exhausting physical side of things, that being carrying boxes back and forth





its key to look at those which have good recommendations and reviews, as you need a company you can rely on. You can use comparison sites, such as [comparemymove.com](http://comparemymove.com) and [reallymoving.com](http://reallymoving.com), to help find you the best deals.

### Getting quotes

You should aim to get at least three quotes from removal companies, preferably from firms which will come out to your property rather than those who just estimate the cost over the phone, as you don't want any nasty charges later on. Plus it will give the company an accurate idea of any restricted areas in your home, if they can park a van or lorry, and how many

items you have. You should also ask for the price to be broken down so you can see just how much you are paying for when it comes to certain aspects like insurance, packing, an hourly rate, mileage and any storage costs.

Once you have found a removal company, it can be useful to send them a briefing sheet that includes information about any items which need to be specially packed, any difficult or large items, plus any carpets and curtains which need moving. Finally, it can also be helpful to send them a floor plan of the new property so they can unload efficiently.

## Top tips for packing

When packing, ensure you don't overload your boxes with heavy items, as these will be difficult to lift and could cause a back injury.

Fill any empty gaps using old newspaper, clothing, socks or even tea towels. This will help secure any items when they are being moved.

Create an inventory and label all your boxes and write the contents on each box with a marker. That way you will know which room each box is to go in. And if you are super organised, you could even colour code each room!

Pack heavier boxes on the bottom. This might seem like common sense but it will ensure that any of your fragile items won't break.

Pack a survival box. These are the things that you will need first and should include paper towels, bin bags, cutlery, the kettle, some mugs, tea, coffee, milk, sugar and finally, some toilet paper!



# NEW YEAR, NEW BEGINNINGS

Get your year off to the best start by marketing your property with Longsons. We'll give you all the tools to get your house on the market.

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