The Criteria Corner

Top tips from the Paradigm Mortgage Helpdesk

Our mini newsletter is designed to give you insights into the topics we see frequently on the Mortgage Helpdesk. We aim to provide you with some great hints and tips which will help you with future cases.

If you think we may be able to assist with your next case, please don't hesitate to get in touch!

03300 536061 | mortgagehelpdesk@paradigm.co.uk

Paradigm MORTGAGE SERVICES


Diane Jones


Katrina Ostrowski


Gio Chanda


Aryan Chohan


Ben Ralph

2026: The Year in Criteria

What a year it has been! 2026 brought new rules for landlords, a major FCA review, a steady stream of criteria changes and, just as things looked settled, the first rise in Bank Rate for three years. For our final Criteria Corner of the year, we look back at the twists and turns that shaped the market, the trends we saw on the Helpdesk, and what to keep an eye on in 2027.

At a Glance



- **Late February**: Conflict in the Middle East unsettled the market. Rising energy prices pushed swap rates sharply higher, and lenders repriced fixed rates and withdrew products at short notice.
- **1 May**: The Renters' Rights Act came into force. Assured shorthold tenancies became periodic tenancies, and buy-to-let lenders updated what they accept as tenancy evidence.
- **June**: The FCA published its Mortgage Rule Review consultation (CP26/18), proposing changes to help first-time buyers, the self-employed and other underserved borrowers, along with a fresh look at the rules on interest-only repayment strategies.
- **Summer**: Bank Rate held at 3.75% into the early autumn, giving lenders room to compete on criteria as well as rates.
- **29 October**: The Budget confirmed £4.7 billion for Your First Home, a new-build equity loan scheme for first-time buyers in England with a deposit from just 2.5%. It also added a further two percentage points to the tax rates on property income from April 2027, on top of the rise announced last year.
- **5 November:** The Bank of England raised Bank Rate from 3.75% to 4%, its first increase since 2023, as rising energy prices pushed inflation back up.



Team Initiatives



Diane became a Mental Health First Aider, adding to her role as our Menopause Champion. In recognition of this work, she was named a Change Maker



Ben and Aryan attended their first external mortgage event, the Mortgage Adviser Expo in September, where they spoke to lots of advisers about how we can help them place more cases.

Trussell
Ending hunger together

The team took part in the Day to Make a Difference initiative, giving their time to support Trussell food banks.

The Criteria Trends of 2026

Interest-only came back into the mainstream

Higher LTV limits, a wider choice of acceptable repayment vehicles and, in places, interest-only for first-time buyers made this one of the most changed areas of the year. Interest-only and RIO enquiries made up nearly one in ten of our Building Societies Collective enquiries in October.

Lending limits and income multiples

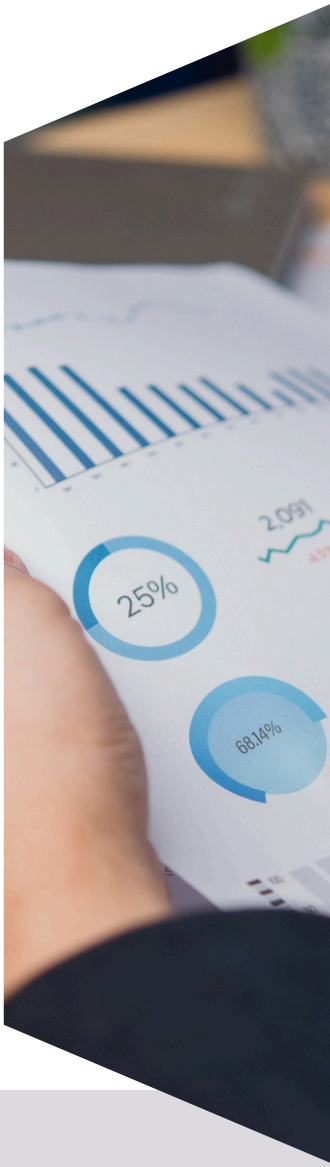
Following the FCA's clarification on affordability stress tests and the Bank of England's changes to loan-to-income limits, many lenders increased their income multiples. Lending Limits was one of our fastest-rising enquiry categories this autumn, up 22% over three months.

Foreign nationals and non-standard income

Several lenders shortened the UK residency they require and raised LTV limits for clients on visas. Contractors, zero-hours workers and those with second jobs also saw more options, and Foreign National and Self-Employment enquiries both rose sharply in October.

Buy-to-let adapts

Between the Renters' Rights Act, higher property income tax ahead and a continued move to limited company ownership, buy-to-let kept us busy. Over a third of our enquiries in the last 12 months related to buy-to-let, and enquiries on limited company purchases rose by a quarter over the autumn. **In response to this demand, we introduced the Complex BTL Collective at the beginning of September.**





Looking ahead to 2027

- **FCA Mortgage Rule Review:** Final rules are still to come and could change how lenders approach first-time buyers, the self-employed and interest-only.
- **Your First Home:** Pre-registration is due to to open by the end of 2026, with applications expected to open in February 2027 and the first sales planned for April 2027.
- **April 2027:** Higher tax rates on property and savings income take effect, so expect more landlord clients reviewing their structures.
- **Bank Rate:** The Bank of England has said November's rise should not be seen as the start of a long run of increases. The next decision is on 17 December.

Top Tip! With rates on the move again, now is a good time to review clients whose deals end in 2027. Many lenders will let you secure a product transfer or remortgage offer up to six months ahead, which can protect clients if rates rise further.

As always, criteria change regularly, so please check with the lender before submitting an application. Information is based on our research at the time of writing.

From all of us on the Mortgage Helpdesk, thank you for your support this year. We look forward to helping with your cases in 2027!



Do you have a suggestion for a topic? **Email** us, we'd love to hear from you. Any questions or comments, we're all ears!

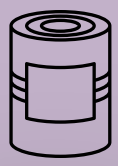
Paradigm
MORTGAGE SERVICES

PARADIGM'S REVERSE ADVENT | 8TH YEAR RUNNING

HELP FIGHT HUNGER THIS WINTER

One item a day for Trussell food banks. Small gifts, big difference.

1



Tinned fruits, meats, fish

2

2.6million+

emergency food parcels from Trussell to people in crisis in 2025

45%

more than in 2019

1,600+

food bank locations

3



Cereals

4



Toileteries

5



Teas and coffee

6



Pasta and rice

7



Juice and UHT milk

8 **HOW IT WORKS**

1. Add one food or toiletry item in a box **every day in December**
2. Drop it at your **nearest Trussell food bank** (Call ahead first)
3. Share your photos with **#ParadigmHelpFightHunger**

9



10



11



900k+

Parcels went to children

12



13



14



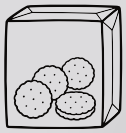
15



16



17



18



19



20



21

CAN'T COLLECT?

Scan to donate on our **JustGiving page**.

Gift Aid if you can.

22

SHARE THE LOVE

#ParadigmHelpFightHunger

Send us photos and how much you collected

Trussell
Ending hunger together