

By Deborah Stone

IF YOUR new year's resolution is to move home in 2022 now is the time to start planning, especially if you've got a home to sell. You might think it's not worth the effort in the depths of winter but industry insiders are predicting house rises of around 3 per cent in 2022, with higher value country markets up by 5 per cent – so it's worth putting your skates on.

Although selling homes has taken considerably longer than normal in 2021 because of Covid and the stamp duty holiday, buyer chains are expected to be shorter next year, says national estate agency Jackson-Stops.

More than half of its branches expect a higher percentage of cash buyers – mostly people who sold last year then rented while they waited for their ideal home to come onto the market.

"Lack of supply governed the 2021 housing market, with our latest data revealing that nationally there are currently 19 buyers for every newly listed home," says Jackson-Stops chairman Nick Leeming, although he says there are 23 buyers chasing each newly listed property in South West England.

"These strong market conditions caused some sellers to delay listing their property for sale until they felt confident that they would find a suitable next home," says Leeming, who expects a stop to such delays. "An increase in new listings, fuelled by homeowners realising the extent to which their properties have risen in values over the past two years, will convince these previously cautious vendors that there are



CARE PACKAGE: Strawberry Star offers an incentives scheme for NHS staff at its LU2ON apartments (above and below) in Luton, Bedfordshire

Winter market hots up

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viable onward properties. We should therefore see a steady flow of new stock coming to market by the second half of the year."

Estate agents and property consultants Strutt & Parker also predict a faster turn-around in sales and Edward Church, head of Strutt & Parker Canterbury, advises vendors to capitalise on the feature that makes their house different.

He adds: "If there are easy improvements

that can be made to your home, make them; then feature them in photographs and styling to really set your property ahead of the competition."

While estate agents hope for more second-hand homes on the market in 2021, if you're a first-time buyer hoping to use Help To Buy for a new-build home, there are a different set of issues.

It is expected that Help To Buy applications will have to be made by December 2022, with the whole scheme closing in March 2023.

In its place is the Government's new First Homes scheme, which offers a 30 per cent discount on new-build homes for first-time buyers – but only if they are key workers.

This is available to households with a combined annual income of less than £80,000, or £90,000 in London, and Simon Cox, managing director and founder of independent land agency Walter Cooper, has doubts.

"I don't think the First Homes scheme that is replacing Help To Buy will work in the South East because it's capping people's prospects to sell on, putting them at a disadvantage to become second steppers."

Dean Markall, sales and marketing director at Martin Grant Homes, is also worried about the end of Help To Buy and says: "There is no doubt we will see a ricochet effect across the country as the rug is pulled out from underneath us, although hopefully the introduction of schemes such as Deposit Unlock and access to 95 per cent mortgages will minimise any impacts."

Developers are also offering help, particularly when they want to boost sales in final building phases.

For example Strawberry Star has an NHS Staff Incentives scheme at its LU2ON site in Luton, Bedfordshire, where apartments start from £195,000 and are just 200 yards from Luton Airport Parkway station (strawberrystar.co.uk).

There's a lot to think about when you're buying a new home but that new year, new you lifestyle change you're hoping for could start tomorrow with a property search.



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