

Moving on up

Police officers, like many other key workers, can struggle to get onto the housing ladder. Suzanne Boyce, Editor of *Homefocus* magazine comes up with some affordable options

Buying a home is the most expensive purchase you'll ever make – and even though the credit crunch has brought prices down a bit, chances are you're still looking at the property pages and wondering whether you will ever get on the housing ladder. But if you know where to look, there is plenty of help available.

The government has set up a range of schemes under the HomeBuy 'brand name' which are designed to help people get on the housing ladder. They are designed to help anyone who can't afford to buy a home of their own, but as a key worker you are likely to be welcomed

with open arms. Essentially, there are three main HomeBuy schemes:

New Build HomeBuy

Also known as shared ownership or part-rent/part-buy. You buy between 25 percent and 75 percent of your new home from a housing association and pay subsidised rent on the portion you do not own. You can buy further shares, known as staircasing, until you own the whole property.

HomeBuy Direct

This is an equity loan scheme. You buy 70 percent of your home through a mixture of savings and mortgage. The remaining 30 percent is funded jointly by the government and the developer as an equity loan – like a second mortgage. There is nothing to pay on this loan for the first five years, after which there's a small interest charge. The advantage of this scheme is that some mortgage lenders will accept the 30 percent equity loan as part of your deposit, reducing the amount you have to find up front.

Rent to HomeBuy

If you don't have enough for a deposit, this scheme allows you to rent the home you intend to buy, at no more than 80 percent of the market rent, on the understanding that you will buy a share through New Build HomeBuy once you can afford to do so. Some housing associations give extra incentives, such as price reductions or some of your rent back as a deposit when you decide to buy.

Key worker schemes

Some areas, such as London, have specially funded schemes available only to key workers. The schemes differ depending on the region, so it is best to ask your Local HomeBuy Agent – the first port of call for anyone buying an affordable home.

Case study - police officer

Meet Matt, Alice and Lily...

Matt's just passed his sergeant's exam. Until now, the family has been renting a flat in London, but with a new salary, and Lily about to start school in September, they're considering their options. They have been to their financial advisor and been told that, with Matt's new salary starting at just over £35,000 they can get a mortgage for around £100,000. They can raise about £20,000 for a deposit and fees from their savings, a family legacy, and help from Matt's parents.

Alice is originally from Kent and Matt hails from the Midlands, so they could return to their roots if Matt can find a job with the local constabularies there, or stay in the capital.

We have had a look round at the best deals and developments in the country for them, and here are just three options:

Option One – Belgar Farm, Tenterden, Kent

Alice's family live in Tenterden, so if the family decide to move to Kent, they could buy a new three-bedroom home in the town on this development. Like most shared ownership properties, the houses have an excellent specification, including fully-fitted kitchen with integrated

appliances. The homes also have numerous eco features such as solar panels on the roof, rainwater collection systems and high levels of insulation, making them affordable to run as well as to buy.

The development is a short walk from the attractive village centre and schools, making it ideal for a family home. The full price for a three-bedroom home is £240,000, so Matt and Alice could stretch to the minimum 50 percent share of £120,000.

- Details from Sanctuary Housing at www.sanctuary-housing.co.uk

Option Two – Henley Grange, Halesowen, West Midlands

Henley Grange is a new development of two, three and four-bedroom homes, some of which are available through HomeBuy Direct. Matt and Alice could afford the 70 percent they'd need to come up with for a three-bedroom, two-bathroom 'Derwent' home. Matt's family live close by – an important consideration as moving so far away from their current home and friends is such a big step.

Moving to Halesowen would give the family a chance to live in a close-knit community, which they both want, while having Birmingham close by – ideal for Matt to further his career and for Alice to find clients for her physiotherapy business.

- Details from Taylor Wimpey at www.taylorwimpey.co.uk

Option Three – Quadrant Court, Wembley, London

If they choose to stay in London, Matt and Alice have the option of moving into the vibrant regeneration area of Wembley City. Choosing a two-bedroom apartment with a balcony or terrace will allow them to stay in an area they know well, having rented a flat here for the past six years. All three of them have friends in the area, and Lily would be able to start school with her friends from playgroup. In addition to this, Matt has already got a job with the Metropolitan Police, so there wouldn't be any upheaval, and Alice would have local contacts to help her start her business. However, their funds would buy them a smaller share of a smaller property – a trade-off for living in the city. The full price for a two-bedroom apartment through New Build HomeBuy is £235,500, meaning Matt and Alice can buy a 50 percent share for £117,750.

Details from Family Mosaic on www.familymosaic.org.uk

- Get a free copy of homefocus, an independent magazine, by checking out www.homefocusmagazine.co.uk The site and the magazine include information about your HomeBuy options and contact details of HomeBuy Agents and housing providers in your area.