

WELCOME

I WROTE IN MARCH THIS YEAR THAT THE EFFECT OF CORONAVIRUS ON OUR PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL LIVES WAS BEYOND FORECASTING.

I also quoted Abraham Lincoln's use of a phrase created for an Eastern Monarch, "And this too shall pass". Both remain as relevant today as they were some six months ago.

During this time, our energies have been focussed on the wellbeing of our staff whilst continuing to serve our members. To maintain our service to you meant the rapid implementation of new technology, allowing effectively all our staff to work remotely from home. This was done in a matter of weeks when, as anyone who has worked in IT can testify, these things can normally take months or even years. For those who still work in our head office we have strict protocols and procedures in place, and you can read some of the measures we have implemented in this newsletter. We did have to reduce our opening hours during lockdown but we were always here for you.

Some members and relatives of staff have sadly succumbed to the virus and my sympathies go to their friends and families. We conducted a members' survey to find out how the last few months had affected you and your families, and we are grateful for the many of you who responded. We have published some of the results in this newsletter and on our website.

We have provided support for those mortgage members who had been furloughed, or whose tenants had stopped paying their rent, by providing nearly 1,000 mortgage payment deferrals. I am pleased to report that almost all of those who requested a deferral have now recommenced payments. We have also provided links to a range of support material and useful sources of financial and mental health information. For our landlord members we created a useful leaflet based on our own real world experience to help them ensure that their tenants know about and are able to access all of the benefits available to them. You can read more about what we have been doing to support our members in this newsletter.



Meanwhile the Bank of England had reduced the Bank Base Rate not once but twice to its historical low of 0.1%. Lousy for savers. Indeed, there has been some talk of having negative interest rates. In fact, we have already seen some negative rates in the market for Government Gilts. We hope that the Bank of England doesn't reduce Bank Base Rate below zero. We just don't believe that it would be of net benefit.

We will each have our own views on the optimal way to balance i) short and longer term health issues, ii) the economy, jobs and businesses and iii) our own rights and freedoms as individuals together with our obligations to others. The most valuable commodity available to us is probably common sense; unfortunately, it sometimes seems in short supply.

Before Coronavirus so dominated our lives, we actively called on policy makers to rethink Stamp Duty, as we firmly believed it was gumming up the housing market. The Chancellor's bold move to cut it below £500,000 has really got the housing market bubbling along and proved our point better than we ever could even in these difficult times. Stamp Duty below £500,000 is due to be reintroduced at the end of March next year - I sincerely hope that it is not. While our economy is in a fragile condition, re-introducing a tax on moving with all the economic, employment and taxation benefits that moving house brings (estate agents, solicitors, removal firms, builders, electricians, plumbers, furniture, carpets, DIY, garden centres) would to my mind, frankly, be nuts.

Finally, may I take this opportunity to encourage you to complete our annual members' questionnaire. Now more than ever, we need to know from you how we have been doing. It is only by hearing your views that we can continually improve our service to you, our members. It is after all, your Society.

MARK BOGARD CEO

MEMBERS' QUESTIONNAIRE

Each year, we give all our members the opportunity to share their experience and feedback with us. We really value your feedback, both positive and negative as it helps us to give you a better service.

You can let us know what you think by completing the online questionnaire by following the easy steps below:

1. Visit familybuildingsociety.co.uk/feedback2020 by typing this into your browser.
2. Click 'Start questionnaire'.
3. Enter your feedback: it only takes around 10 minutes.
4. Select 'Submit'.
5. You will then be taken back to our website for the opportunity to enter our prize draw for a chance to win £500*.

Like previous years, we are partnering with eForest and will plant a tree for every 10 questionnaires completed online to help our ambition of reducing our carbon footprint.

*Terms and conditions apply. For details, please visit familybuildingsociety.co.uk/feedback2020

2020 AWARDS

We are proud to have added a number of awards to our cabinet this year.

WHAT MORTGAGE AWARDS:

Best Guarantor/Assisted Mortgage Lender (Winner)

Best Offset Mortgage Lender (Highly Commended)

MONEYFACTS AWARDS:

Best No Notice Account Provider (Winner)

Best Building Society Savings Provider (Highly Commended)

PERSONAL FINANCE AWARDS:

Best First Time Buyer Mortgage Provider (Winner)

CORONAVIRUS CUSTOMER SURVEY

On 23 March this year, the UK went into lockdown due to the Coronavirus pandemic. For some, this had a major impact on their families, friends and of course themselves, both economically and in the health of their loved ones. Tens of thousands of families suffered or continue to suffer financial loss through redundancy or had to make do with significantly reduced income while being furloughed.

We wanted to get some insight on how Coronavirus had affected you, our members, and your family financially; as well as hear your views on how the pandemic had changed your savings plans. So in July we sent out a survey to a randomly selected group of 10,000 members. Over 1,040 responded.

WHAT YOU TOLD US

Many of our members had family who had been financially affected by Coronavirus but were able to support their family financially. As one respondent said, "family comes first".

Financial support:

As 62% of members surveyed were retired, the effects of Coronavirus were more keenly felt by their families. Just under half said they had family members who had been furloughed or suffered a reduced income. Of that half, 26% had provided financial support to their family members, mostly their children or grandchildren.

Savings and investments:

Many respondents said the pandemic had not changed their views on their long-term goals, however, some members' outlook had changed. There were concerns about having sufficient funds when retirement came, due to low interest rates linked to their pensions. Others explained that they were looking at ways of investing their savings in other assets such as property, or gifting money to family so they can get on the property ladder whilst there is a Stamp Duty holiday.

"A change of perspective but plans remain the same."

Savings behaviour:

We asked if their savings behaviour had changed during the pandemic and 54% said it had made no difference as they have always been good savers. However, 35% saved more, noting that due to the limitations of lockdown, they had spent less on luxuries and focused on the essentials.

"We are cushioned, protected by our previous savings behaviour."

With the low interest rates and the economic uncertainty, it was no surprise that almost 60% of our members prefer having instant access to their money.

HOW WE HAVE ADAPTED TO THE CHANGE

Not only have we worked hard to ensure we continue to give our members a high level of service with as little disruption as possible, we have also made lots of changes in our Head Office and Epsom branch to keep our staff safe and efficient.

We have:

- encouraged our staff to work from home where possible, reducing the numbers in our Head Office.
- allowed staff to take equipment home to help with working from home, whether IT equipment or furniture. Plus introduced Microsoft Teams, headsets and webcams to help with communication in and outside of the Society.
- hand sanitising stations at entry to our Head Office and Branch, as well as providing hand sanitiser on all desks.

- introduced a one-way system throughout the office to reduce congestion and staff passing one another.
- separated desks to allow social distancing.
- made masks available and put up perspex screens in our Epsom branch.

Caring for our staff's mental health is just as important as their physical health. We have dedicated and trained Mental Health First Aiders to provide support for our staff. We run virtual positivity workshops, and send regular staff communications promoting the importance of mental health, staying active, eating well and taking regular breaks.

We will continue to provide support to our staff through these unprecedented times as well as looking after the needs of our members.

Personal financial situation:

Half of our members felt as financially secure as before the pandemic and interestingly, nearly 3% felt more secure. The rest felt less secure or much less secure. The feedback we received was mainly around worries about the economy, low interest rates and how the Government intends to pay for the debt accumulated during the pandemic.

As a result of a volatile stock market, 31% said they were less likely to invest in Stocks and Shares.

"The world has become more risky and less certain."

Economy

It was interesting to see what our members thought the Chancellor should do to balance the books:

Answer choices	Responses
Cut public spending	16.4%
The Government should borrow more	19.0%
Increase indirect taxation i.e. VAT	22.0%
Introduce more green taxes	24.3%
Reform council tax at a rate proportionate to house values	31.1%
Cancel large Government funded infrastructure projects	32.2%
Increase direct taxation i.e. income tax	44.3%
Raise taxes for the most wealthy	58.4%

Others also suggested clamping down on offshore accounts, tax havens, tax avoidance schemes and removing tax loopholes, so that larger companies operating from offshore locations pay the tax at UK rates.

Overall, our survey has highlighted that many of our members haven't been directly financially affected by Coronavirus, however they are concerned about their children and grandchildren and have in some cases, provided essential financial support. It is also clear that our members, like the rest of the country, are nervous about the future of our economy and how it will impact their saving and pensions. Another concern regularly mentioned is how the accumulated Government debt will affect the prospects of future generations.



"I am really proud of how the society has come together to implement new systems, keeping the office as safe as possible, offering flexibility and supporting each other in a difficult and unprecedented time. At times things have been a bit bumpy and it's taken some trial and error, but I think we've done our best and I am proud of how far we have come!"

- Hannah, HR Assistant



HOW WE ARE SUPPORTING OUR MEMBERS DURING THIS UNCERTAIN TIME

The Coronavirus has left many people with financial worries and for some, concerns on how they will pay their mortgage payments. We have taken steps to provide support and advice to help ease the pressure in our members. So, what have we done to help?

Mortgage payment holiday

Up until October, if any of our members suffered a reduction in income due to Coronavirus and couldn't pay their mortgage payments, they were entitled to request a payment holiday for up to three months.

Helping landlords help their tenants

We are providing advice for landlords on how's best to support their tenants who may be struggling financially and mentally. Our handy leaflet also contains third party support details for both the landlord and tenant. You can download a copy here familybuildingsociety.co.uk/landlord



Further support and advice

We have put together a list of helpful websites which may be able to provide additional support and advice for anyone struggling with their finances and/or their mental health during this time. More information can be found here familybuildingsociety.co.uk/payment-advice

If you are worried about your mortgage payments or accessing your savings, please contact our friendly service teams using the details on the back page.

A MEMBER OF STAFF'S EXPERIENCE

Working from home

I'd not long started working at Family Building Society before we were asked in March at the start of the Covid crisis to work from home! I'd taken a career break looking after my children before joining, so it was nice to be back at work and I was still adapting to a new environment.

In under a week though, I found myself working at my kitchen table and our incredible IT team were able to provide me with what I needed to work from home effectively. Different teams had varying requirements but what struck me, was the way the whole of the Society really pulled together to overcome the challenges and the amount of support I received as a new team member working remotely.

All Society staff worked so hard to keep service levels to a high standard and to protect those staff who still needed to be in the office. Special measures were taken to keep our branch open. There was so much involved to provide the right support and information to our customers and our staff.

No one expected lockdown to run as long as it did, and some days were more challenging than others. Despite being in a new job and home-schooling my two children (year 5 maths is harder than I remember!), I had the full support of my team and I consider myself very lucky to work for a company who demonstrates such a strong commitment to their staff.

– Priscilla, Marketing Executive



FRAUD AND SCAMS ARE EVOLVING

Cyber security evolves and adapts with current events, so when a global pandemic hit the world it changed the way we lived and worked drastically. We essentially became more isolated and, many of us have had to adapt to working from home. With this, we had to learn new practices such as using alternative ways of communication, not only at work but with our friends and family too.

After lockdown there was a massive increase in phishing and ransomware attacks. Emails that claim to have come from the World Health Organisation, the UK Government or fake NHS organisations, had started to increase in circulation. There were thousands of new Coronavirus-related websites registered within a week of lockdown in the UK to facilitate scams, hackers and people with malicious intentions. Scammers have had a great chance to exploit everything Coronavirus-related. They thrive in periods of change and when people are more prone to react to an email claiming to be from a government organisation or other normally trusted organisation.

So now, more than ever, it's important to stay vigilant and follow our tips to keep yourselves safe:

Passwords

Never share your passwords with anyone and never use the same password across multiple logins. We recommend using a mixture of lower and uppercase letters, special characters and numbers within your passwords.

Emails

Look out for suspicious emails, they will generally have one or more of the following; bogus sender email address, spelling and grammatical errors, generic greetings, unprofessional email signatures, links to another site, inflicting a sense of panic and asking you to take an urgent action. If you have any doubts about an email you have received, contact the company by phone. If you receive an email from the Society that you are suspicious about, forward it to besecure@familybsoc.co.uk

Phone calls

If you have received a phone call which you are suspicious about, don't be afraid to decline all requests for information or hang up immediately. Always confirm the identity of the person who you are speaking to, and never give them any of your sensitive information, such as your pin number or full bank card details. If you are ever in doubt, simply call the company back using a phone number you are familiar with or from their website.

Websites

Trusted websites will start with "https" instead of "http" in the web address, the "s" means the site is secured. The website should also have a locked padlock symbol at the start or end of the web address bar.

You should also look for a privacy policy and find their contact information, these are usually good indicators that the website is safe.

If you think you have been a victim of Fraud or a Scam, you should contact Action Fraud on **0300 123 2040**. They will be able to help you with the steps you need to take next.

SUPPORTING OUR CHARITIES

This year has been a challenging year for everyone, and sadly, charities have been amongst those sectors most heavily impacted. Social distancing has meant that the vast majority of large fund-raising events have been cancelled, so now more than ever charities are relying on donations to fund their day to day existence. For this very reason we're delighted to say that we've maintained a close relationship with the local charities chosen by our staff, providing regular donations to help keep them going over an incredibly tough period.

Here's a reminder of our chosen charities, and a bit about what they do.

- **SeeAbility** – Based in Leatherhead, Surrey, SeeAbility provides specialist support, accommodation and eye care help for people with learning disabilities, autism and sight loss.
- **Surrey Young Carers** – Offers support to all Surrey's carers, including young carers, adult carers and professionals who work with carers.
- **Princess Alice Hospice** – Has a team of specialist nurses, doctors, therapists, social workers and bereavement volunteers who provide care and support in their hospice in Esher, and also with families in their own home.
- **Age Concern Epsom** – Offers a wide range of services for older residents who live in the borough of Epsom and Ewell.
- **Epsom and Ewell Foodbank** – Founded by local churches and community groups, this project works together towards stopping hunger in our local area.

To date, each of our chosen charities has now received in excess of £5,000 in donations since we first started working with them, but there's never been a time when they needed help more.

"We are determined that come what may, we must continue to provide the same levels of care, not only during the current crisis but long into the future as well. I believe that the generosity of spirit shown in donating at this time is the bedrock of what is good about this country and will be what helps us all get through this current crisis together."

"We are so grateful that there are organisations like the Family Building Society are out there to support our work by appreciating the value of a donation at this time. We couldn't do it without you."

– Princess Alice Hospice



BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT

The awful reality is that due to Covid-19 some of us have lost family and friends before their time. Taking care of a lost loved one's financial affairs can be daunting and you may not know where to start. We have put together some helpful information of what you may need to do on our website familybuildingsociety.co.uk/Bereavement. You or someone you know, may also find the governments step-by-step guide helpful gov.uk/when-someone-dies

THE WINDFALL BOND

Our Windfall Bond is one of our most popular savings products, but you told us that you wanted to increase both the prize fund and your chances of winning a windfall. So, in September, we made some changes – for the better!

To allow more members to benefit from the prize draw, we have increased the fixed number of tickets in each monthly draw from 10,000 to 15,000. Of course, just adding more tickets could have lowered the chances of winning, so we also added eight additional prizes which means there are now 21 prizes to be won each month. The chance of winning over the course of 12 months has increased to one in 60.

Our Windfall Bond customers now have the chance to win the following prizes each month:

- 15 prizes of £1,000
- Three prizes of £2,500
- Two prizes of £10,000
- One prize of £50,000

For more information on our Windfall Bond visit our website familybuildingsociety.co.uk/windfall



WAYS TO STAY IN TOUCH

FAMILY BUILDING SOCIETY

familybuildingsociety.co.uk

Existing Account Enquiries:

Savings: 03330 140144
savings.service@familybsoc.co.uk

Mortgages: 03330 140146
mortgage.service@familybsoc.co.uk

New Business Enquiries:

Savings: 03330 140141

Mortgages: 03330 140140

newbusiness@familybsoc.co.uk

 facebook.com/FamilyBSoc

 twitter.com/FamilyBSoc

Epsom Branch

Ashley Square, Epsom,
Surrey, KT18 5DD

Opening times:

Monday to Friday: 9am to 3pm
Excluding Bank Holidays

Head Office:

Ebbisham House, 30 Church Street,
Epsom, Surrey KT17 4NL

Please check our website for the most up to date opening times.

We may record any telephone calls we have with you in the interest of staff training, monitoring customer service or for security purposes.

Family Building Society is a trading name of National Counties Building Society which is authorised by the Prudential Regulation Authority and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority and the Prudential Regulation Authority. Firm Reference No. 206080.



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