



Guide: How to Choose the Right Estate Agent

Finding the right estate agent is very much a personal choice, they should make the process of selling your home as simple and stress-free as possible... but how do you choose the right estate agent for you?

The best way is to compare estate agents to get an overall idea of what's out there. There are a few vital things to look out for (and some things that you might think are important but actually aren't), that can help make your choice a lot easier.

What to Look out for with an Estate Agency

Estate agencies vary, from large corporate entities to small individual businesses and will all be different in their approach to marketing your property and what services they can offer. The use of the internet can be incredibly helpful as a starting point to see who is out there. There's no one single way to do things in the property industry. However, there are some things to look out for that can make a big difference to the sort of selling experience you have.

Location

Today, thanks to improved technologies, both high street and online agencies can offer their services to the public irrespective of the locality of the property and can attract a wider audience.

Cost

High street estate agents can charge between 0.75% and 3.0% + VAT for their services, while their online counterparts often have lower overheads, passing the savings to sellers.

Contract terms

Although reading the small print can be time consuming and rather dull, it is critical that you know what you're getting into when you sign on the dotted line. Perhaps the most obvious thing to pay attention to here is exactly what you get for your money, as some estate agents will include a fully comprehensive service as standard, while others may charge extra for services such as photography, print marketing, and online promotion.

Other aspects to pay attention to in your contract include selling rights and fee structures. Some estate agents include a sole selling rights clause, which means that you can't use more than one estate agency to market your property. This may not be too big an issue, as many sellers opt to work with one agency alone. However, if you believe your home may be particularly challenging to sell, it can help to expand your reach by overlapping your efforts. Fee structures are important because some agencies may charge simply for finding a buyer, leaving you out of pocket should you need to pull out of the sale in the future. It's best to use an agent that charges upon completion.

If you are considering using an online agency it is important to ask whether they charge one commission fee irrespective of the number of sales (don't forget 1 in 3 often do) or do they charge for each transaction they arrange? What may have appeared "reasonable" at the outset could cost more in the long term.

Experience

In many cases, sellers won't require their estate agent to have niche expertise in selling specific types of properties. However, if your home is unique or different to others in the vicinity or if the conditions of your sale are unusual, it can help to work with an estate agency that is experienced in handling situations such as yours. This is why you'll find some estate agencies specialise in specific areas such as high value properties which often require a slightly different skill set and strategy than what's needed selling the average mid-size terrace, for example.

Performance

How well is an estate agency performing in terms of its property marketing efforts? One of the best ways to determine this is to check out how an agent has handled other properties that they've taken on. By browsing through online property portals such as Rightmove and Zoopla, you can see how different estate agents are marketing their properties through content, imagery, and premium listings. If you find that an agent has used poor imagery, or has failed to provide a full overview of the property in the listing, then it could be a sign that the agent's performance is not particularly good overall.

Another way of gauging performance is to watch the number of for sale boards and how quickly they change to sold boards. It's a little like people watching but gives an indication of how popular an agent may be in an area and how quickly they can sell a property.

Valuation

It's always a good idea to ask two or three estate agents to visit your property and provide a valuation report. Why? Because a common trap that many sellers fall into is that they choose the estate agency which gives them the highest valuation; the agency believes it can sell the property for more than was expected. However, if you do receive a valuation that's above and beyond the others, it's important to question whether the agent honestly believes they can sell for this price, or whether they're just trying to get you onboard. Remember that the highest valuation may not be best and buyers could be deterred from viewing if they see the property has remained on the market for sometime and begin to question whether there is an issue with the property, rather than the price.

Quick Questions to Ask

How often do you sell for the asking price, or over?

What methods will you use to sell my property?

What happens if you fail to sell my property within a certain timeframe?

What online and offline channels do you use to market properties?

Will all members of the team be familiar with my property?

Please contact us should you require any advice...

Contact

Kevin Steele - Director

t: 01329 245 543

e: kevin.steele@movuslaw.com

movuslaw.com

Movus Law | E4 House, Fareham Heights, Fareham, PO16 8XT

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