



SOUTHGATE

ESTATES



A GUIDE TO CHOOSING YOUR ESTATE AGENT

Moving home is said to be one of the most stressful things we do in life. Choosing a good Estate Agent can make a huge difference to the whole process - so what should you look for when choosing an estate agent to sell your home?

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Choosing Your Estate Agent



This guide is written by Southgate Estates Director, Jonathan Newall. Prior to setting up the business (formerly SaleBoards), Jonathan worked as a chartered engineer. It was his personal experience of buying and selling houses that inspired Jonathan to set up a truly different estate agency, where customers are always treated honestly and fairly. If you would like any further advice or have any questions, please feel free to give Jonathan a call.

WHAT DOES A GOOD AGENT LOOK LIKE?

A good estate agent can should be working for you (you are their client), and should support you throughout the whole process from booking a valuation through to completion (when the keys are handed over to your buyer). Their knowledge, skill, attitude and experience can make a huge difference to how stressful and time-consuming the process is for you. They should be aiming to achieve the best price for your property, whilst also being realistic and not over-valuing it just to win your business.

Their fee should be competitive but may not be the cheapest - sometimes you get what you pay for!! They should have the skills to market your property professionally and confidently, so take time to look at their marketing material as this will attract potential buyers to view your home.

Their skilled sales negotiators should be available to act on your behalf to achieve a sale and they should have experienced staff who can progress your sale through to completion. It is important that your agent communicates with you in a timely way and is easily contactable during office hours - good communication can be a vital part of reducing the stress involved in selling your home. They should be willing to listen to you and be able to advise you appropriately and honestly. It is crucial that you feel you can trust them to sell your home.



TAKE TIME TO DO YOUR RESEARCH - IT WILL BE WORTH IT IN THE LONG RUN

CREATE A SHORTLIST:

AIM TO ASK JUST A FEW AGENTS TO VISIT YOUR HOME TO VALUE IT (3 IS A GOOD AVERAGE)

It's useful to find out about a number of local agents and then narrow it down to just a few to ask in to value your home. Getting valuations from three agents will usually give you a good idea of the value of your home and the services on offer.

Consider asking family and friends for recommendations, and those they would not recommend, finding out why in each case can be helpful. Have a look at online property sites to see which agents are in your area (e.g. Right move, Zoopla). Take a look at their listings and consider how professional their photos look and how clear and accurate their information is. Also look at the agents own website to see how professional and user friendly it is.

Look at the reviews on reliable review sites such as AllAgents, Facebook and Google. You may want to visit a few local offices and ask about a property, note how friendly, knowledgeable and helpful they are - how would you feel about them selling your home for you?

If an agent asks you what you are expecting to achieve before they give you a valuation, it is a sign that they are not confident to give you a valuation. If asked, simply remind the agent why you have called them in.



Call or email each the agents on your shortlist, arrange a time for them to visit your home so they can value it and you can meet them.

Use this call / email as part of your decision making. How quickly did they respond to you? How polite and friendly were they? Did they sound interested in you and your property? How easy was it to book an appointment? Did they confirm the appointment in writing for you (by email or post)?



QUESTIONS TO ASK / CONSIDER AT YOUR VALUATION:

THINGS TO CONSIDER INCLUDE THE AGENT'S PROFESSIONALISM, THE PRICE (VALUE) THEY GIVE YOUR HOME, THEIR SERVICES (INCL. MARKETING AND AFTER-SALES SERVICE) AND THEIR CONTRACT.

PROFESSIONALISM

- Are they on time, smart, professional and friendly?
- Do they take time to look around?
- Do they seem interested in your home?
- Are they willing to listen to you and answer your questions?
- How well do they know your local area (schools, transport etc.)?

PRICE

- Have they done their research (i.e. have they looked at comparable properties that have sold / on the market in your area)?
- What price are they suggesting for your home? What is their evidence for this? (Remember - Do not tell the agent what you are expecting)
- What percentage of properties do they reduce in price before they achieve a sale (i.e. are they over-valuing to win business)?

THEIR SERVICES (INCL. MARKETING AND AFTER-SALES)

- Do they explain their services and fees clearly? (Fees are usually a percentage of the final sale price)
- What is included in their fee and what is extra? Have they included VAT?
- What do they charge for EPC's (Energy Performance Certificates), how are these arranged?
- What is the quality of their marketing materials like - ask to see them (website, brochures etc.)? Where do they advertise?
- Do they accompany all viewings or are you expected to do all / some of them?
- How will they let you know about viewings or give you feedback?
- What level of viewings would they expect? What is their evidence?
- Do their staff have sales targets to meet or do they work as a team?
- Once a sale is agreed, how will they help to progress your sale? Do they have dedicated and experienced staff to do this?
- How do they liaise with third parties (solicitors, surveyors etc.)? Do they get any payment / kickbacks from recommending financial advisors or solicitors?

THE CONTRACT

- Were you given a copy of the contract? Is it easy to understand?
- What sort of contract is it? (See terminology below)
- Make sure you READ AND UNDERSTAND THE CONTRACT (it is a legally binding document)
- Do they have a tie-in period? How long is it? How easy is it to leave if you want to and are there any charges if you leave early?
- What happens if you find a buyer privately yourself?
- Is there a 'cooling off' period once you have signed the contract?
- Is there a complaints procedure? Has a customer ever complained to the Ombudsman?
- Which professional bodies are they registered with (Property Ombudsman, National Association of Estate Agents etc.)

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT? WILL THEY CONTACT YOU OR WAIT FOR YOU TO CONTACT THEM?

Never be pressured into signing up there and then. Take time to consider and compare what each agent is offering before making your decision.

If the agent is putting pressure on you, it is probably because they know you won't use them if you have time to think about it.

TERMINOLOGY

READ THE CONTRACT CAREFULLY. CHECK WHAT SORT OF CONTRACT IS BEING OFFERED BEFORE YOU SIGN ANYTHING. COMMON TERMS ARE:



Sole Agency: The agency is the only one who can sell your home during the agreed period, but if you find your own buyer, you won't have to pay the estate agent anything.

Sole Selling Rights: Think carefully before signing this type of contract. The agency is the only one allowed to sell your home during the agreed period BUT you WILL have to pay the estate agent, even if you sell to a family member

Ready, Willing and Able Purchaser: Think even more carefully before signing this. You have to pay the agent for finding a buyer, even if you decide not to sell in the end.

Joint / Multi-agency: You can use more than one agent and only pay commission to the one who sells your property. You may get more exposure, but you will pay higher fees and it looks as if you are desperate to sell.

Fixed Cost: Generally paid up-front and non-refundable. This may be cheaper than the above options but often offers a reduced level of service. Check carefully to see what is / isn't included in the fee and bear in mind that there is no incentive for the agency to sell your property if they have already been paid.

DECIDE WHICH AGENT TO GO WITH:

HAVING MET THE AGENTS, FOUND OUT ABOUT THEIR SERVICES AND HAD THEIR VALUATIONS, YOU NEED TO CHOOSE WHO YOU WANT TO USE TO SELL YOUR HOME. HERE ARE A FEW SUGGESTIONS THAT MAY HELP YOU TO MAKE THE DECISION:

- Write a list of strengths and weaknesses for each agent
- Rate your relationship with each agent e.g.
 - Does their branding work with your property?
 - Did you develop a good rapport with them and others in their office?
 - Were they approachable, professional and honest?
 - Would you trust them to show others around your home?
- Compare the valuations (remember that the highest valuation is often a 'white lie' to tempt you to use their agency. Have them confirmed their valuation in writing to you?)
- Compare the fees and the service you get for each one, (a good after-sales service can be crucial in seeing your sale through to completion)

IF YOU HAVE FURTHER QUESTIONS OR WANT MORE CLARIFICATION, CONTACT THE AGENT - THEY SHOULD BE VERY HAPPY TO ANSWER YOUR QUERIES.

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