

Choosing the right agent

James Stevens of Stevens' Estate Agents in Okehampton, comments:
With a number of estate and lettings agencies in any town, there are a few important factors for potential sellers and landlords to consider in choosing the right one for them and their property...



The age of an agency speaks volumes – the services of a long established agency are tried and tested so the length of time it's been trading is a great testament. One that's firmly established is also likely to have a loyal team of staff with extensive local knowledge and experience, which gives them a greater understanding of the area and its market conditions and therefore the ability to come up with realistic, achievable valuations. It's no good giving over-inflated valuations to win instructions if properties are going to sit on the market for months or even years – that's not in anyone's best interests, least of all the homeowners'.

Marketing is extremely important. Many buyers and tenants visit agent's offices and still scour the local newspapers for their potential new home. However, to reach a much wider audience and given that around 90% of buyers starting their search for property online, the Internet is absolutely key - so find an agent which offers extensive online exposure.

Many agencies offer free Energy Performance Certificates (EPC) as part of their sales package. All properties need an EPC at marketing stage by law and getting one for free will instantly save around £60. And remember the wise old saying 'you get what you pay for' - the best agent often isn't the cheapest.

Membership of a governing body, such as the NAEA (National Association of Estate Agents) demonstrates an agent's commitment to providing a decent, honest and reliable service. Letting agents in particular handle a large amount of clients' money and lettings members of the NAEA must agree to annual audits of their client account to ensure accurate and safe accounting. Using an agent which is not affiliated to such a scheme holds higher risks for both landlords and tenants.

And lastly, talk to local friends and family for recommendations and personally meet the agents on your shortlist - your property is likely to be your biggest asset so choosing someone you trust is vitally important.

Stevens' Estate Agents is a family business, established in Okehampton since 1977. Over the last 34 years, the firm has built an excellent reputation based on quality of service, friendliness and professionalism with many repeat clients and a great number who come to us by recommendation. We hold one of the largest portfolios of rental properties in the area and membership of the NAEA, and as part of the **team** network of independent agents, we work together with over 100 other **team** offices across the Westcountry to sell more property for clients with unrivalled in-office, printed and online exposure.

If you would like to discuss any aspect of buying, selling or renting a home, give me a call on 01837 53300.