

Top tips when looking for a *lettings agent*

The last couple of decades have seen many people become landlords for the first time and maybe planning to grow a portfolio. They're navigating a sector that has become increasingly complicated and, understandably, many choose to work with lettings agents. But if you're a landlord, what should you be looking for in an agent?

ARLA Propertymark has recently issued some guidance for landlords on the subject. As the leading professional body for agents with over 17,500 members, it's perhaps not surprising that they recommend choosing a Propertymark member as your agent, but the advice makes sense. The organisation has a strict code of practice and demands standards that exceed legal requirements.

Naturally, you should always make your own decisions and other agents may offer everything you need, including high standards and a professional approach.

Research the agent

Before you sign up with an agent, do your research. Check reviews and look on landlord forums. Ask other landlords for their advice. Ask the agent for testimonials. See if you can talk to any of their other clients.



PRS Property
Redress
Scheme

Check the agent is a redress scheme member

It is a legal requirement for agents to be signed up with either The Property Ombudsman or the Property Redress Scheme. Both schemes will help if you have a dispute with the agent that cannot be easily resolved.

Check the agent is in a Client Money Protection (CMP) programme

Agents must, by law, safeguard your money. The UK Government has a CMP scheme. In England, all agents who handle your money must be members. There are similar provisions in the Rent Smart Wales programme and for agents working within Scotland.



Talk to the agent

You want to be sure you'll be happy working with an agent, so if you can, meet them. At the very least, talk to someone and when you do, trust your judgement. Do they seem to understand and offer what you need?

- Are they supportive and practical as well as professional?
- Think about how easy it was to get in touch. Did they return your call, or did you have to chase them?
- Is their website up to date? Is it helpful?
- Where are they located? A local agent will be able to handle viewings more readily but may not offer all the services you want.
- Check the details. Look at their charges and ask how and when you'll receive your rental income.

Finally, ask whether they belong to a professional body, like Propertymark, and what that means for them and for you.



Summing it up

A good agent will save you time and effort and protect your interests. Spend the time upfront, finding the right agent. It will be quicker than unpicking any problems that arise if the relationship doesn't work for you.

Do the checks:

- ✓ Check the agent out
- ✓ Check the redress and CMP provisions are met
- ✓ Check their professional status
- ✓ Check you get on with them

**Don't be swayed by the size of the agency.
An independent business can be just as good as a big chain.**



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