

Stuarts Homes was established in 1908 and is a family run business based in Cheadle. They have been accredited with safeagent since 2003.



What is the market like in your area currently?

In our area, we are experiencing a shortage of property to let whilst having high demand for people looking to rent. As a proactive agent, we try to link property to people and vice versa to minimise any void periods, but the movement between properties has noticeably declined. We think this is due to the current cost of living and energy crisis' but we also think that we look after our tenants as well as our landlords which stabilises the movements somewhat. We are keen to take on many more properties locally and feel that we are the safeagent in the area to do the job well for landlords.

What do you see as the biggest challenge for your firm in 2023?

The property industry news never cheers you up does it? There is so much doom and gloom with negative reports of low lending news for buy to lets and changes to taxes which will dramatically affect many landlords and which, in my opinion, is spooking landlords out of the industry.

The imminent Renters Reform Bill is likely to be a challenge this year both logistically in such a small business as well as communicating it correctly to landlords effectively. The frustrations of a quick roll out of these changes to smaller businesses such as ours is always daunting when the business must change systems, procedures, and paperwork to reflect all of the changes required, all whilst trying to keep landlords updated and on board with the changes and continuing to run the business on a day-to-day basis.

If you could speak to the Government about the PRS, what would you say?

I feel we have a positive and pragmatic approach to changes that the Government deem important. We believe that we are providing a good service to the PRS and providing a good standard of housing whilst conforming to all legislative requirements but, given the chance to speak to Government, I would ask them to consider the following:-

The housing crisis would be worse without the PRS. This needs to have some serious consideration to make it an interesting concept for those that are able to become landlords so that the PRS can be

developed to help the housing crisis rather than discourage new investors into the sector. If over 20% of the UK rents property, logic tells me that Government should be opening their arms to landlords rather than slamming them at each avenue.

More collaboration with councils; Councils should have clear records and a register of all properties that are rented with the introduction of regular Ofsted type inspections (without notice) to verify if indeed all certifications and legislative requirements are adhered to. To hear of occasional fines is not having a strong enough impact on the rogue landlords. Landlords should be encouraged to use professional firms more to ensure that industry standards are met. It shocks me to think of what sums of money could be collected by the Government if they policed the industry via Councils more. It's ok having rules and regulations, but who is policing them? Rogue landlords are not likely to conform until it affects their pocket more than certifications cost.

The dramatic North / South divide that exists – I would like them to consider that not all landlords and agents are rogue and acknowledge that there are many that invest in the PRS. Not all properties are uninhabitable and not all landlords are unscrupulous; professional safeagent firms ensure this.

To make things clearer, it seems a new legislation is made but often it is open to interpretation causing conflicts. As an agent, if we don't understand something we seek advice to ensure we are doing things correctly, but often the new rules conflict some other element of the industry. Consistency and well thought out processes need to be more considered. Government departments should visit agents occasionally to see how things really are 'out there' instead of relying on surveys as these can often have dramatic responses from either end of the spectrum as opposed to truthful.

What makes you want to continue to be a letting agent?

No-one likes to see people homeless and distressed without a home; we feel proud to be in the PRS knowing that we are providing good and safe homes to those that have a rental requirement for whatever reason.

The diversity of each day makes the job so interesting; we meet so many different people from all walks of life. The challenges and problem solving of being a letting agent keeps the interest there too. With constant changes in the industry and legislation changes, you really must keep on your toes and every day we learn something new!

Are you involved in any local charity initiatives?

Throughout 2022 landlords, tenants and staff a charity event run by Signpost for Carers. We collected many presents for less fortunate children of all ages to enable them to have a good Christmas, particularly this year with the cost of living crisis. We also made the decision not to send out Christmas cards this year and instead contributed to The Big Issue campaign that safeagent signposted in their December newsletter.

Why are you part of safeagent?

It is, in our opinion, the flagship organisation in the property industry representing good practice and values. In completing the **safeagent** qualification, both landlords and tenants can trust, respect and value us in knowing we are professionals within the industry.