

Ascend

BUILT ON HIGHER STANDARDS

Guide for Landlords

Everything you need to know



ascendproperties.com



Welcome to an independently-run, independently-minded estate and lettings agency.

Ascend was founded on the belief that estate and letting agents could do a lot better.

We'd been working in the industry for a long time and were frustrated that most agencies were just so ordinary. Like their houses, these places were in need of a new lick of paint. Bit of rising damp in the basement too. So we decided to build our own home.

This new home wasn't made of sticks or straw. It was founded on a deep-rooted, decade-long knowledge of property, from the very bricks and mortar of the city centre to its outer reaches, by a team of savvy individuals

who loved the city and loved helping people invest, move and live all over the UK.

A team of quick thinkers and good listeners who did that rare thing: treat customers like people instead of transactions. Because they knew great service wasn't just about experience and expertise.

We had one philosophy; to keep the promises we made. Then we opened the doors.

Welcome to Ascend.

We're built on higher standards.

Before you can open your doors to tenants, there's a few important things to get ticked.

First, the ifs

- > If your property is mortgaged, you'll need written permission from your lender for you to let it. A let-letter, if you will. We'll need to see it too. This doesn't apply if you're on a buy-to-let scheme, for obvious reasons.
- > If you'll be living overseas for over six months, you'll need to register with the HMRC. It's best to do it before you let your property, as we'll automatically deduct tax from any monies we collect from you.

The HMRC site has full details on how it works at www.gov.uk/tax-uk-income-live-abroad

You can find the right form at www.gov.uk/government/collections/non-residentlandlordsforms you'll need our reference code, 904/ NA054542



Next, the legals

ENERGY PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE (EPC)

This is a report which displays the property's energy efficiency and allows tenants to see potential energy costs. If you don't have an EPC, we can sort one for you.

FIRE SAFETY LABELS

A furnished property must have fire-safe furniture, and must carry the appropriate labels as per the The Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988.

ELECTRICAL CHECKS

To ensure your fixed electrical installations and appliances are safe, you should have an engineer carry out an inspection before letting the property.

Further checks should be made once every two years. Although not currently a legal requirement, we'd recommend you obtain an electrical safety certificate, just to be safe.

GAS SAFETY CERTIFICATE

Your property must be certified as 'gas safe' by law, and by an engineer on the Gas Safe Register. Keep the certificates you receive safe too. Inspections should be carried out once a year. We can organise one for you if need be.

HOW ASCEND CAN HELP YOU?

We like to think we're much more than your average agency. We're a partnership. We don't 'just' do lettings, we manage your assets. It's that simple.

As a landlord, you benefit from an award-winning team with customer service at the heart of everything we do. Our robust infrastructure and internal processes result in a seamless service for both you and your tenants - because we only deliver a service at the standards we would want to receive ourselves.

Here's just a quick snapshot of what you can expect:

- > **Your very own portfolio manager:** One single, dedicated point of contact for you to deal with
- > **Regular reviews:** We'll negotiate rent increases across your portfolio
- > **Updates:** Regularly. You'll receive quarterly performance reports keeping you up to date
- > **Easy accessibility:** Our portal allows you to view everything online 24/7
- > **We'll protect your property like it's our own:** All tenants will undergo a rigorous reference and vetting process including a credit check from three different credit reference agencies and a bank check. If that wasn't enough, we also run checks with their previous landlord and employer.
- > **Inspections:** Our team will regularly visit your properties and give them the TLC they need to stay in top condition
- > **Advice:** We're buy to let specialists and you'll benefit from unrivalled advice, including the best times to let your property, so you can achieve the best returns possible



WHAT WE DO FOR YOU

BEFORE THE TENANCY

MARKETING

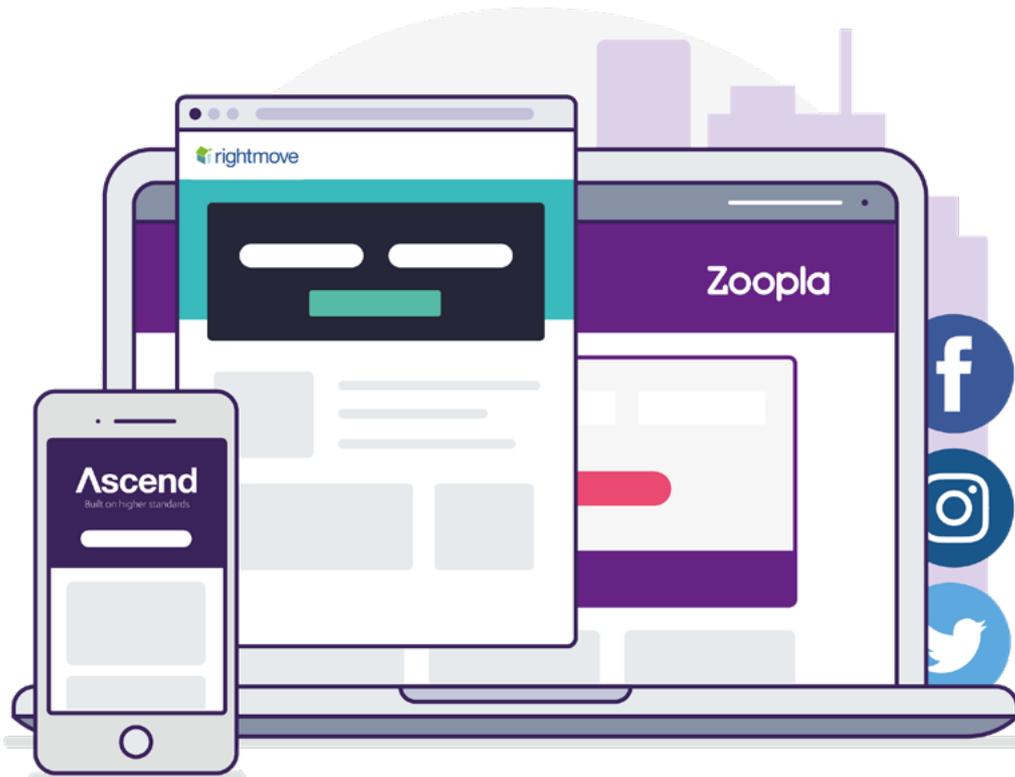
Our team works hard to get your property seen in the right places. We not only feature it on the two biggest property sites, Rightmove and Zoopla, we upgrade it to a premium listing as standard. We'll also showcase it on our Facebook, Twitter and Instagram feeds too. Additionally, we utilise the power of PR at every opportunity.

No one wants to look at shoddy property profiles – which is why we only use high quality photos and floor plans, backed by engaging descriptions that people, well, actually want to read (an aspect many agents overlook). We offer great little add-ons like video walkthrough tours and drone aerial shots too. All these elements come together to give your property the best exposure possible.

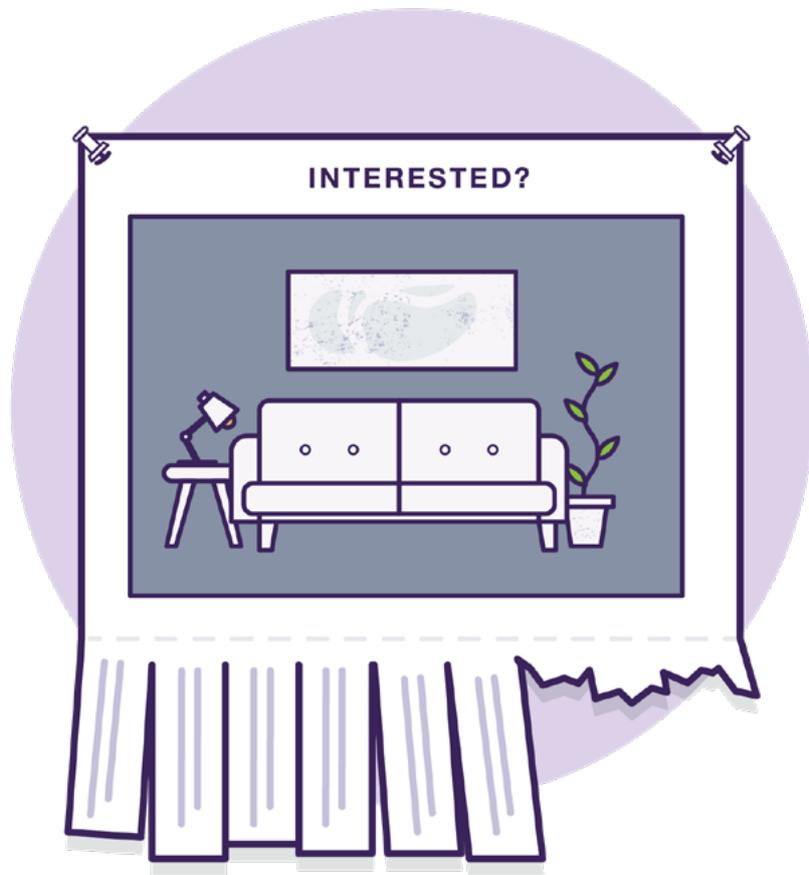
Not only that, we also use clever marketing software that matches your property's criteria to the right tenants based on demographics, so we can send out highly-targeted emails, newsletters and adverts.

Our interactive touch screen outside our city centre branch on Deansgate also gives your property added exposure. The footfall has been incredibly high with 80,000 screen interactions already this year (61% of these were out of hours) – that's one heck of a stat!

And we work with our corporate and relocation contacts to spread the word even further. It's safe to say our marketing team all earn their sleep.



* Statistics correct as at Nov 2016



VIEWINGS

We'll accompany potential tenants to viewings – and you're always welcome to come along. While tenants get to experience the property, we get to vet them and spot any rascals.

Most agencies let your property to the first person who steps through the door - but not us. In fact, we often find open-house viewings are the best way to get the best tenants. Generally, we pick a 1 or 2-hour slot and secure 20 - 30 viewings. The sense of urgency it creates is undeniable, leading to offers that can go way above the asking price. It also allows us to cherry pick the best tenants for you and your property.

It's a method that works in the US - and for us. And it works wonders for your investment.

FINDING TENANTS

When it comes to tenants, it's not as simple as first come first served. We make sure your property has many viewings before we decide on who's best suited to living there.

Plus, we have a thorough vetting process, which includes:

- > Credit checks
- > Previous landlord checks
- > A work reference
- > Social media searches
- > Where relevant, a fully-referenced guarantor
- > We'll ask a tenant referencing company for their opinion, too
- > Sometimes, it's also appropriate for us to do a home visit

WHAT WE DO FOR YOU: BEFORE THE TENANCY

THE PAPERWORK

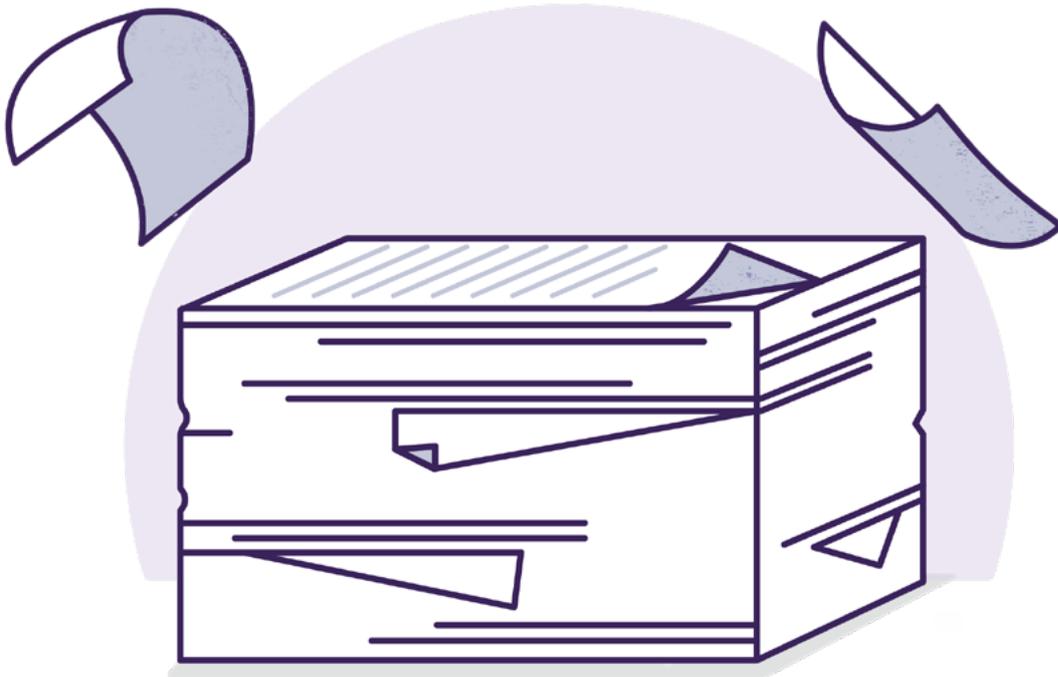
It's the least glamorous part of the process, which is why we do it all for you. Whether they're guarantor forms, Assured Shorthold Tenancy (AST) agreements or long-term contracts, we write them up, let you make adjustments, then sign them on your behalf – though, of course, all contracts are an agreement between you and the tenant.

SECURITY DEPOSIT

We collect a security deposit, about one and a half month's rent, from tenants. Agents have a duty to protect security deposits, so we use the aptly-named Deposit Protection Service (DPS) or the Tenancy Deposit Scheme (TDS) to do so.

INVENTORY AND CHECK-IN

Conducting a rigorous inventory for your property encourages tenants to treat it with respect. We create a detailed electronic record of your property's condition, taking stock of all its contents and their respective states, backed up by photos. Tenants agree to this inventory during their check-in at the property and we all leave happy.



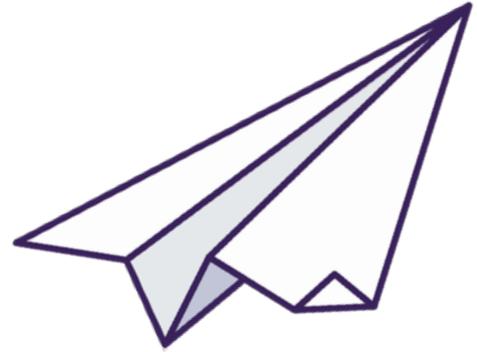
WHAT WE DO FOR YOU

DURING THE TENANCY

MAKING LIFE EASIER

We take care of a whole raft of things as the tenancy rumbles along:

- > Regular financial statements
- > General tenancy issues
- > Legal compliance
- > Legal notices including sections 8, 21 and 13
- > Rent reviews, generally once a year or on renewal



NOTIFYING SERVICE PROVIDERS

Once the tenancy begins, we give the council a head's up and send meter readings to the relevant water, gas and electric companies. It's down to tenants to choose a broadband provider.

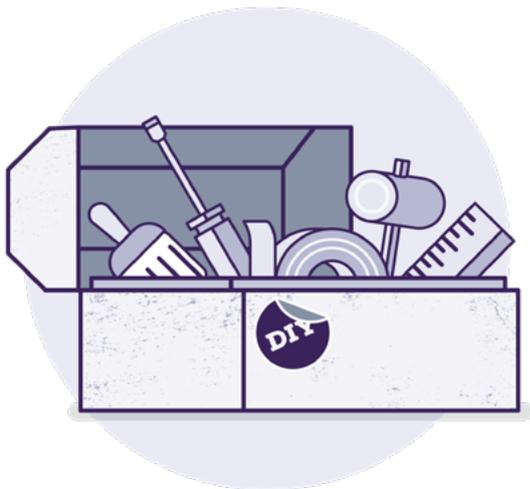
RENT COLLECTION

Tenants send rent via standing order at a specified date, which we forward to you, minus our fees. We also provide a handy monthly statement alongside it. Any late rent payers will be chased and guilted by our large internal accounts team who are experienced (and immune) to non-payment excuses. Unfortunately, if we can't collect rent from a tenant (it happens rarely) we can't be held responsible. It's worth taking out rent collection insurance to protect yourself. Ask one of our portfolio managers for further information.

WHAT WE DO FOR YOU: DURING THE TENANCY

MAINTENANCE

Burst pipes, rising damp, faulty electrics; maintenance is a big part of the job. And we dedicate a big chunk of time to it, with our team on hand to respond to tenant maintenance requests made by phone, email or online. With your recommended contractors and budgets, we'll get it sorted.



PERIODIC VISITS

There's nothing like a visit to ensure tenants are playing nice with your property. We opt for one every four to six months, swooping in and conducting a thorough inspection, photos and all. We'll send you the full report to put your mind at ease.

To help out further, we use Fixflo, a simple online solution for managing repairs and maintenance. It's designed so you get all the information you need without having to chase tenants or continually visit the property. Impressively, in over 20% of cases, Fixflo helps you avoid the need for a contractor. Quicker answers, fewer outlays - what's not to like?

There's no charge for the software either, as we absorb the cost ourselves and throw it in as part of your management.

ONLINE SERVICES

All landlords and tenants have access to their very own online area. For tenants, it's a place to log maintenance requests, view payments and access documents. For you, it offers access to back-statements, important documents and invoices, helping you stay on top of your properties.

DEDICATED PROPERTY MANAGERS

Tenants receive a dedicated property manager with Ascend. This one person will deal with all tenant queries from start to finish, so you don't have to. It's all part of our personal service which we like to think contributes to happier tenants. And we all know that happy tenants are usually long-term tenants.

PORTFOLIO MANAGEMENT

Whether you have one, two or three (hundred) properties, we help ensure they're all well managed. For larger portfolios, we offer detailed monthly reports, quarterly portfolio reviews and a host of bespoke services. There's nothing worse than speaking to a different person every time you call your agent - which is why you'll have your own portfolio manager.

All of our portfolio managers are fully ARLA qualified too - which not only means we're adhering to higher standards at all times, but we'll also make sure you receive the best possible quality of service. Everything from evaluating the best time to let your property and undertaking rent reviews, to negotiating new fixed term contracts and avoiding void periods, will be covered from start to finish by your very own dedicated point of contact.

And, thanks to some nifty software, your manager has access to our database of property information when they're on the road, so they can react to your requests wherever they are.



NATIONAL COVERAGE

We have partners across the UK, so we can manage your properties whether they're in Newcastle or Newquay. It also means you get a single point of contact who knows everything about your portfolio, right down to which floorboards squeak - making it much easier to keep your property plates spinning.



WHAT WE DO FOR YOU

AFTER THE TENANCY

NOTIFYING SERVICE PROVIDERS

Once tenants give notice, we let the council know and send meter readings to the relevant water, gas and electric companies once we've obtained them at check-out. We also take down new addresses so we can forward any rogue bills or birthday cards.

CHECKING OUT

We make sure all is well as the tenancy comes to a close, organising a check-out day and time with tenants, sending out final meter readings, notifying the council and distributing a detailed check-out report.

REIMBURSING DEPOSITS

After a final inspection of the property, we determine whether tenants can have the full sum of the deposit, or whether any deductions should be made due to cleaning/damage. Everyone is well informed throughout the process so no one feels short-changed.

TENANT-FREE TIME

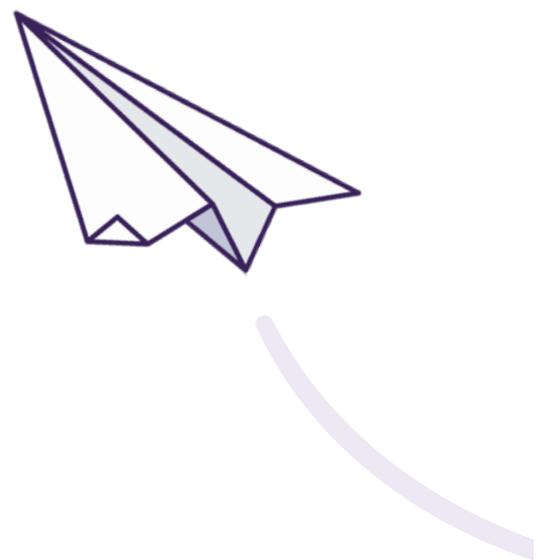
There is generally a few days' gap between old tenants leaving and new ones moving in, so we have enough time to make any repairs and get the property looking fresh.



THINK WE'D MAKE A GOOD PARTNERSHIP?

We like to make everything as super-simple as possible. So even if you're letting your property with another agency, we can switch you in a jiffy. Here's what's involved:

- 1.** Let us know you'd like to switch over. We'll then take a look at any necessary paperwork to see if a get-out clause is in place
- 2.** We'll contact your current agent and supply them with copies of a signed authorisation letter, notifying them of the switchover
- 3.** Finally, we'll contact any current tenants in your property and introduce them to Ascend. We'll also request a new standing order



Switching over doesn't have to be a hassle, and you'll be able to switch over even if:

- > Your properties are already managed by another agency
- > Your property isn't currently tenanted (as we'll aim to get tenants in as soon as possible)
- > You're in the process of buying a buy-to-let property
- > You're currently self-managing your properties
- > You've always used a let-only service and now wish to move to a full management service



WE'RE EXPERTS IN WHAT WE DO...

A HANDY FACT SHEET

PRE-LET PHASE	FULLY MANAGED	LET-ONLY
Initial appraisal	✓	✓
We'll visit your property for an appraisal and full consultation	✓	✓
Our professional photographer will take some snaps for the marketing of each property	✓ Charges apply	✓ Charges apply
Your property will be placed and upgraded to premium listings on the relevant portals, such as Rightmove and Zoopla, as well as being featured on our Ascend website. We'll also utilise our social media channels and intelligent email marketing platforms to match tenants to your property	✓	✓
Property viewings will be organised and held by our lettings team. We'll even conduct an open-house if our team feel this is the best course of action	✓	✓
We'll take care of all the references and financial checks for each tenant	✓	✓
Our team will prepare the necessary Tenancy Agreement	✓	✓
A detailed inventory of the property and its condition will be taken	✓	✓
APPLICATION PHASE	FULLY MANAGED	LET-ONLY
We'll take note of meter readings and notify necessary utility companies of a new tenant, including council tax.	✓	✓
The first month's rent and deposit will be requested and secured	✓	✓
We'll make sure all necessary paperwork is signed and complete before or on the date the tenant moves in	✓	✓

DURING THE TENANCY	FULLY MANAGED	LET-ONLY
The deposit will be placed into either the DPS (Deposit Protection Service) or the TDS (Tenancy Deposit Scheme)	✓	✓ Charges apply
Rent will be collected monthly and remitted promptly into your account	✓	✗
Our team will regularly schedule and conduct property visits for you	✓	✗
Any repairs or maintenance issues will be resolved quickly via a dedicated property manager assigned to your tenant. Tenants can also make requests online	✓	✗
We'll make sure your gas checks and certificates are all kept up to date	✓	✗
Section 21, 8 or Section 13 notices will be served when necessary	✓	✗
Any tenancy extensions or rent increases will be taken care of by us	✓	✗

END OF TENANCY/MOVE OUT	FULLY MANAGED	LET-ONLY
Our team will take care of everything throughout the checkout process, including taking meter readings, returning keys and making sure there's no damage to your property (this is why it's important to do a thorough inventory at the start)	✓	✗ Available at a cost
We'll make sure your property is left in top condition after a tenancy has ended	✓	✗
Utility companies and local authorities will be notified of the change in occupancy	✓	✗
We'll arrange any necessary cleaning or repairs before a new tenancy	✓	✗
The deposit will be returned to the tenant/you based on our findings from the check-out process	✓	✗
Your property will be prepared for re-letting and a full rental assessment will be undertaken	✓	✗

SEALS OF QUALITY

Four icons that are marks of our higher standards.



THE ASSOCIATION OF
RESIDENTIAL LETTING AGENTS
(ARLA)

Not every agent can become an ARLA member. They have exacting criteria for registration, and all agents that are part of the body must commit to the best ethical and professional standards.



SAFE
AGENT

The granddaddy of approval schemes, SAFE agents must have good accounting standards, have the right insurance and be part of a number of other accredited schemes - including ARLA and NALS – before they can bare the honoured mark of a Safe Agent Fully Endorsed.



THE NATIONAL APPROVED
LETTINGS SCHEME (NALS)

After a strict approval process, this licensing body allows us to be part of a Client Money Protection scheme and offer you access to an independently-monitored customer complaints procedure - giving you, and your tenants, peace of mind.



THE PROPERTY OMBUDSMAN
(TPO)

A true mark of quality, a TPO member must provide consumer protection that goes way beyond the standard requirements of law. It also acts as a platform for complaints and any issues that could arise between tenants, landlords or agents.

TESTIMONIALS

“

Ascend manage a small portfolio of properties for me and I genuinely cannot recommend them highly enough. The service I receive is consistently great across the board. They take all the hassle away from being a landlord and all of it for a reasonable fee”.



M Withers ★ ★ ★ ★ ★



“

I use Ascend to manage a small portfolio of investment properties and am pleased to say that they provide an excellent full management service with all rents collected on time and more importantly, I get paid on time. They deal with all day to day tenancy issues without fuss and I would happily recommend them to anyone”.

JM ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

WE'VE WON AWARDS FOR OUR SERVICE

We're proud of our awards. Not just because we love a trophy, but because they were voted for by real landlords, tenants, vendors and buyers. Feel free to visit www.allagents.co.uk and see for yourself.

AllAgents Awards

- Gold - Best Agent in the North (2017)
- Silver - Best Agent in the UK (2017)
- Gold - Best Overall Agent in North West (2016)
- Gold - Best Letting Agent in North West (2016)
- Gold - Best Overall Agent in Manchester (2016)
- Gold - Best Letting Agent in Manchester (2016)
- Gold - Best Letting Agent in Greater Manchester (2016)
- Gold - Best Overall Agent in M3 Postcode (2016)
- Gold - Best Letting Agent in M3 (2016)
- Silver - Best Branch in the UK (2016)
- Bronze - Best Estate Agent in M3 postcode (2016)
- Bronze - Best Letting Agent in L1 (2017)
- Bronze - Best Overall Agent in L1 (2017)

Landlord & Lettings Awards

- Winner - Overall Letting Agent of the Year (2016/17)

ESTAS

- Gold - Best Letting Agent in North West (2017)

We were also finalists for:

- Sales and Lettings Agent of the Year

Insider North West

- Newcomer of the Year

RESI Awards

- Lettings Agent of the Year (Single Office/Property Management 1001+)

Letting Agency of the Year Awards

- Property Entrepreneur of the Year 2016

EN Awards



THINK WE'D BE A GOOD FIT?

WE'D LOVE TO CHAT TO YOU.

Manchester

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Manchester
M3 4EN

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manchester@ascendproperties.com

Liverpool

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Old Haymarket
73-89 Victoria Street
Liverpool
L1 6DE

0151 305 2577
liverpool@ascendproperties.com

Property Management Centre

Stafford Court
145 Washway Road
Sale
Manchester
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0161 669 4982
contactus@ascendproperties.com

We're on social too:



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