

ADVICE AGENCIES

The following other bodies also provide legal advice and help:

- Citizens' Advice Bureaux
- Law Centres
- Claims management companies
- Community Legal Service Website
- Other agencies such as the AA/RAC, trade unions, charities and insurance companies.

Citizens' Advice Bureaux

- Staffed by volunteers, including solicitors
- Give general advice free to the public
- Specialise in social welfare problems and debt, some advising on legal matters
- Have a list of solicitors who do government funded work
- The Benson Commission (1979) recommended that CABs be staffed by para-legals and have more government funding.

Law Centres

- Law Centres offer free legal services, ie advice and sometimes representation.
- Common areas of work include housing, welfare, employment and discrimination
- They have suffered from a lack of funding and some have been forced to close

Claims management companies

- These organisations deal with personal injury cases which are taken-on on the basis of Conditional Fee Agreements (see below)
- They advertise widely on television and in newspapers

ROLE OF THE LEGAL PROFESSION

Lawyers run the following schemes:

- A free or fixed fee (up to £25) interview
- ALAS, the Law Society's Accident Legal Advice Service, which provides a free initial interview and a helpline to solicitors
- Free Representation Units, whereby barristers and solicitors do work *pro bono publico* (free for the good of the public)
- Conditional Fee Agreements (see below for details)

Features of Conditional Fee Agreements:

- Agreement between solicitor and client
- Used in civil (non-family) cases
- Client does not pay solicitor
- If client wins, solicitor is paid normal fee plus uplift fee to reflect risk. Uplift fee is payable by losing side as well as award of compensation and insurance premium (see below)
- If client loses, solicitor is paid nothing and costs payable to other (winning) side are covered by after-the-event insurance (premium paid by client or solicitor)
- Maximum uplift should be no more than 100% of normal fee and not more than 25% of the awarded compensation
- Introduced under the Courts and Legal Services Act 1990. Brought in by the Lord Chancellor for personal injury, insolvency and European Convention on Human Rights cases in 1995
- Extended to all civil cases, except family, in 1998