

INSURANCE ADVICE

Following the recent floods have you been approached by someone offering to help you fill out your insurance claim?

Before accepting such an offer you should know that:

- **You can make a claim directly and free of charge from your insurer**
- **A third party may take a cut of any payout**
- **If you choose to accept help from a third party check they are regulated by the Financial Services Authority or are an exempt professional firm such as a law firm**
- **Free, independent advice is available from your local Citizen's Advice Service**

This note is designed to give advice to those households in flood damaged areas who are intending to claim on their insurance policies and to let you know that you can make a claim directly and free of charge to your insurer. Insurers are regulated by the **Financial Services Authority (FSA)** and they have to handle your claim fairly.

Following the recent flooding you may be approached by individuals or companies who offer you help in progressing your insurance claims (for example, by offering to notify your claim to the insurer or to negotiate it on your behalf).

Recent advice from the FSA, endorsed by the Association of British Insurers (ABI) recommends that you think carefully about whether you want to hire a third party's help.

The ABI have reported that *"the insurance industry has mobilised staff and contractors from around the country to meet the enormous challenge the widespread flooding has brought. We are working with the Government and local authorities to put families, businesses and communities back to normal as quickly as possible."*

If however you do decide you want to hire a third party to help you progress your insurance claim, make sure you check how much it will cost you first as they may charge a share of any sum paid out by the insurer. This may leave you short of the money you will need to repair damage and replace possessions.

Before accepting the help of individuals or companies who will expect payment in return for their service you should also check that they are regulated by the Financial Services Authority (see their Register at <http://www.fsa.gov.uk/register/home.do>) or are an exempt professional firm such as a law firm (see the [Exempt Professional Firm \(EPR\)](#) section of the FSA Register).

Where to go for help

National Advice

The **Financial Services Authority** (FSA) is an independent body that regulates the financial services industry in the UK. As well as regulating most types of financial services firms, one of their main aims is to protect customers of financial services, including insurance.

The Financial Services Consumer Contact Centre can answer general enquiries about financial products and services. They can also tell you if a firm is authorised and point you in the right direction if you don't know who to contact.

You can contact them by calling their Consumer Helpline (call rates may vary):

- 0845 606 1234
- Minicom/textphone – 0845 730 0104

Opening hours are between 8am and 6pm Monday to Friday.

The **Association of British Insurers** (ABI) <http://www.abi.org.uk/> has a useful list of questions and answers about flooding and insurance on their website.

Local Advice

Free, independent and confidential advice on financial matters such as progressing insurance claims is available from your local **Citizen's Advice service**. Advice is available face-to-face and by telephone.

To find your local **Citizens Advice Bureau** and to get details such as opening times, phone numbers, information about access to the bureau and other languages available in addition to English go to

<http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/index/getadvice.htm> or phone 020 7833 2181.

Useful Sources of Information

For factsheets on insurance

ABI Information Zone

www.abi.org.uk

For insurance guides and Find a Broker service

British Insurance Brokers Association (BIBA)

www.biba.org.uk

Consumer Helpline – 0901 814 0015

Useful Sources of Information (continued)

For an insurance broker who is an IIB member
The Institute of Insurance Brokers (IIB)
www.iib-uk.com

For guidance on making a claim for compensation
The Claiming Compensation guidance leaflet
www.advicenow.org.uk/compensation/
OR Dedicated Claims Regulation site
www.claimsregulation.gov.uk/publications.aspx
Dedicated telephone number - 0845 4506858.