

Crackdown on Claims Management firms welcomed

The Ministry of Justice recently announced that it had closed more than 100 claims management companies as part of its crackdown on firms which mislead the public and Jacqueline Shicluna, of Kent based solicitors Stephens & Son LLP, has welcomed their vigilance.



Stephens & Son is accredited by the Association of Personal Injury Lawyers and Miss Shicluna, is a member of The Law Society's specialist Personal Injury Panel. She commented: "The general public do not always appreciate the difference between claims management companies and legal firms. Some claims managers, who advertise on TV and in the press, entice clients to contact them and then sell the work on to selected solicitors for them to handle. The solicitors will pay a sometimes-hefty fee for this work. It adds no value to the claims process but yet another layer of costs, that one way or

another has to be accounted for. Claims managers are an unnecessary intermediary in the claims process."

Closer to home, Miss Shicluna said she was disappointed to learn that the A&E departments of some Kent hospitals were advertising the services of claims management companies while, at the same time, turning down advertising from local legal firms.

She said: "When we tried to renew a longstanding agreement to advertise in one hospital we were turned away and told that they no longer accepted advertising as they did not want to be seen to be encouraging claims. I do not understand why this same hospital has accepted advertising from a claims management company."

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Miss Shicluna said some claims management companies try to run cases in-house at least up until it becomes necessary to issue proceedings, but fail to investigate claims properly and, with time running out, decide to abandon the claim, leaving the claimant powerless.

In other cases, she said claims management companies turn tail when they realise the case could become complex and expensive to pursue.

Stephens & Son have had many calls from injured victims looking for last minute help to save their case in just such circumstances. In one case, the client was told just before the time limit for claiming ran out, that the case was not strong enough to pursue. In fact, it was a reasonable claim with a significant value and the truth was that the claims management company had not done the necessary work.

Miss Shicluna said: "At Stephens & Son we have a long track record in this field and get work from personal recommendation or through our own advertising. A client will benefit from using a specialist local law firm, like us, who will meet them in person. A face-to-face meeting often brings out important information which can be crucial in terms of how the case is handled and how much compensation might be due."

Stephens & Son does not pay referral fees for work from claims managers and Miss Shicluna said: "The client is under the impression they are getting a great deal from a claims management company, when in fact they are paying a very high price for the service they obtain. In my view they would be better off approaching a specialist firm direct."

Stephens & Son LLP, established in 1793 and situated in Railway Street, Chatham, offers a comprehensive range of specialist legal services to individuals and businesses and has a dedicated team dealing with personal injury claims.

For further information, visit Stephens & Sons or APIL websites – www.stephens-son.co.uk or www.apil.org.uk – or telephone 01634 8111444.

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