

# Press Release

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## Free advice for the taking: but many ignore the offer

ADVICE is probably the most common additional service fleets want from their funding providers.

This can cover a range of topics and is often provided in the form of glossy brochures, 24-hour telephone helplines or online support. Again most of the information is free, but not automatically offered up, so fleets must tap into this wealth of knowledge. Any information which helps run or maintain the fleet is of use and, if supported by the funding company, it can help strengthen relationships with suppliers through regular contact and networking.

*Neil Davies, technical director at Car Benefit Solutions, said: 'In order to add value to customers, fleet suppliers should provide advice and guidance regarding subjects that have an impact on the operation of fleets. These subjects include changes to health and safety legislation, consumer credit regulations and accounting standards relating to leases.'*

However, funding companies must have a strong customer service package to be able to provide quality advice when fleets need it.

This includes a reputable branch network, transparent communication and efficient call centres. Fleets must make sure this structure is in place when they choose a funding provider.

Harvey Perkins, director at KPMG, said: 'Most leasing companies now have one telephone number for all services and where this is backed up by efficient and prompt answering call centres that really understand the scheme, it can be really positive.'

The amount of advice available will depend on the individual funding companies but fleets should be able to access information on topics including risk management, environmental issues, cost savings, policy implementation and additional funding methods.

Jon Walden, managing director of Lex Vehicle Leasing, says that more funding companies are offering advice on environmental issues. He reckons fleets need to expect a little more than standard carbon dioxide figures though.

He said: 'Contract hire suppliers should be able to not just inform customers about what cars have the best CO2 emissions, but look at the overall impact such as reducing fuel consumption, reducing mileage covered by employees, reducing local parking congestion to major sites and best use of technology such as phones and home working.'

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## Fleet funding: supplementary services include fleet insurance

ASIDE from advice and online tools, funding companies should be able to provide a range of supplementary services including insurance products, providing the Financial Services Authority (FSA) regulates them.

Since January 5, this year companies selling insurance products such as GAP insurance, vehicle replacement insurance, early termination insurance, vehicle warranties and similar motor insurance products need accreditation from the FSA to be able to legally continue selling them.

As long as funding providers have this accreditation then products such as GAP insurance and credit protection will be offered alongside the more standard motor insurance products.

Andrew Cope, chief executive at Zenith, said: 'Funding companies can provide certain types of insurance products and advice, namely, GAP insurance and early termination insurance, also providing advice on what constitutes a good deal from an insurance perspective or handling claims including uninsured loss recovery.'

***However, fleets should be demanding more in terms of the type of insurance product being touted by funding providers, according to Neil Davies. He believes that tailored packages, which fit individual fleet needs, are more suitable than a generic product to fit everyone. He said: 'Many insurance products sold by fleet suppliers are off-the-shelf. To add value to customers, fleet suppliers should offer more flexible products that are tailored to customer needs as companies often face very different risks or have different attitudes to risk.'***

Some funding companies already tailor individual packages depending on fleet needs. These can cover basic administration to arranging payment of fines. By taking advantage of such services, fleets can reduce their own administrative burden and even save costs.

Andrew Dawson, service development manager at Interleasing, said: 'Funding companies can help with congestion charging, fine administration and dispute handling – the increasing number of fines and any disputes from drivers is an administrative burden for many fleet managers and this is a service that funding suppliers can provide for them. They can also offer integrated packages, including interim solutions like short term hire and minilease, to keep drivers on the road, even in the event of unforeseen circumstances.'

In such a competitive market fleets should be able to demand a variety of additional services. However, it is also vital that service quality does not drop just because funding providers have to do more than provide funds.

Customer service levels should always be high and if problems do arise then switching funding provider is not as difficult as it sounds. Richard Schooling, commercial director of Alphabet, added: 'What is critical is the contract hire company's own attitude when it comes to service quality. They outsource the on-the-ground delivery of the extra services, so it's vital that they choose suppliers with care and take full ownership of what is delivered in their name.'



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## About CBS

Car Benefit Solutions Ltd (CBS) is an organisation based in the North West, devoted to the development of cost effective strategies to maximise the perceived value of car benefit for employees whilst minimising the provision cost to the employer. Since their inauguration in July of 2002, CBS have established themselves as a leading authority on structured workplace car schemes and the supplier of choice to several major UK corporates. Their business is dedicated to the design, development, implementation and ongoing management of tax efficient alternatives to the traditional company car.

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