



Letter to Northern Ireland newspapers

November 2015

Sir,

Imagine that your wife or husband goes to work one day and doesn't return home, ever, because they were killed as a result of an employer's failure to do what he is legally obliged to do to protect his employees. In the midst of all the personal devastation and grief you learn that the employer is liable to pay you a statutory sum of just £11,800 for your loss. This is the level of statutory bereavement damages in Northern Ireland. It is the lowest in the UK.

A public consultation from the Department of Justice (DoJ) closes at the end of this month and proposes to increase the level of damages, perhaps in line with England and Wales at £12,980 – still an insultingly low and arbitrary figure. Not only is it cheaper to kill workers in Belfast than it is in Liverpool, here it is also cheaper to kill employees than it is to pay damages for causing them to lose two front teeth.

In Scotland a much fairer system prevails where each case is judged on its own merits.

The DoJ consultation is, at least, a step in the right direction. I hope the step is made and that the department takes heed of the obvious need for reform to go much further.

Martin Hanna

Executive committee member for Northern Ireland

Association of Personal Injury Lawyers (APIL)

