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PRAISE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND EXECUTIVE AS PLAQUES CONSULTATION IS LAUNCHED

A move by the Northern Ireland Executive to look at compensation for pleural plaques victims has been praised by lawyers acting for injured people.

The Executive has launched a consultation paper following a shock decision by the House of Lords last year, which said plaques sufferers could no longer claim compensation because the condition, caused by asbestos exposure, is symptomless. Mounting pressure to either overturn the decision or provide an alternative solution for those diagnosed with plaques resulted in a similar consultation in England and Wales, and legislation to overturn the decision is already going through the Scottish Parliament.

Stephen Gray, Northern Ireland's representative for the Association of Personal Injury Lawyers (APIL) said the fact that the Scottish Government had already proposed this legislation would make it "inherently unfair" if Northern Ireland did not follow the same path for victims.

"For the sake of those negligently exposed to asbestos, the Executive should follow the Scottish Government's lead and legislate to overturn the Lords' decision," he said.

"It's all very well when victims are told the condition is harmless, but the fact that they have been negligently exposed to asbestos in the first place means they are playing a waiting game, wondering if they may be facing a death sentence."

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Note to editors:

- A copy of the consultation paper, issued by the Department of Finance and Personnel, can be found at: <http://www.northernireland.gov.uk/news-dfp-131008-pleural-plaques>
- APIL (Association of Personal Injury Lawyers) is a not-for-profit organisation, whose members are dedicated to campaigning for improvements in the law to help people who are injured or become ill through no fault of their own

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