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FEE HIKES WILL PRICE CLAIMANTS OUT OF COURT, WARN LAWYERS

Claimant lawyers have warned that court fees could rocket by more than 4,000 per cent if Government proposals are given the go-ahead.

Responding to a Ministry of Justice (MoJ) consultation on civil court fees, the Association of Personal Injury Lawyers (APIL) said injured people could be left high and dry as the increases will effectively price them out of the courts.

APIL president Amanda Stevens said the changes would mean fees could rise, on average, by around 55 per cent, and more than 4,000 per cent in some areas.

“Increases on this scale are staggering and will undoubtedly make it more difficult for injured, vulnerable people to receive assistance from the courts if a claim cannot be settled any other way,” she said.

Amanda has questioned the motivation behind the proposals and said she hoped the increases were not part of a drive to direct litigation away from the courts.

“The proposals raise the question of whether raising the fees so drastically is the Government’s way of pushing more cases to settle through mediation or arbitration,” she said. “While mediation can work when it benefits all parties involved in a claim, under no circumstances should it be forced on people by the courts.”

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Notes to editors:

APIL responded to the MoJ’s consultation paper on Civil Court Fees 2008:
<http://www.justice.gov.uk/docs/civil-court-fees-2008-consultation-paper-cp31-08.pdf>

APIL’s full response: <http://files.apil.org.uk/pdf/ConsultationDocuments/1506.pdf>

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