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## **STUDENTS URGED TO SPEAK UP ABOUT SAFETY**

Students taking on summer jobs in the hospitality trade are being urged to speak up about safety hazards in the workplace.

As hotels, pubs and restaurants take on students keen to earn extra cash through the holidays, chief executive of the Nottingham-based Association of Personal Injury Lawyers (APIL), Denise Kitchener, says students must not be afraid to speak out if they are asked to carry out unsafe tasks, or are asked to work in hazardous conditions.

"Environments such as pub kitchens can be a hotbed for safety hazards, and we are concerned that young people who are only employed for a few months through the holidays, will be afraid to speak up if they feel their safety is at risk," she said. "There are some rogue employers who don't put the safety of their employees at the top of the agenda, but the reality is that they have a responsibility to protect them regardless of whether they are temporary or not."

Twenty-two year old Ciara McShane was working in a pub during a summer break from university, hoping to earn extra cash in time for the next semester. But Ciara found herself penniless and in pain when, on a particularly busy shift when the bar was running low on glasses, she was asked to take hot glasses from the pub's dishwasher before the cycle had finished, to speed things up.

"I did as my manager said and went to get one load of glasses out early. Because they were mid-cycle they were very hot and one just exploded in my hand," explained Ciara.

Ciara could see only a very small cut, but soon noticed that the feeling had gone in two of her fingers. The glass had severed the main nerve running through Ciara's hand and she had to endure surgery in an attempt to put it right. Two years on, the feeling has not returned fully to one of her fingers.



"I couldn't get more work for the rest of the summer. It was a struggle because there were things I wanted to do, but couldn't, and I was short on money which I could've earned had this not happened," she added. "Because it was just a summer job and I hadn't been there long, I wasn't even entitled to any sick pay for the time I was in hospital."

Denise says Ciara's is not an isolated case. "Injuries like this can and should be avoided in the first place. Employers have no right to put a worker's safety at risk no matter how busy they are.

"We would advise all workers not to do anything which they think may put them in danger, and not to be afraid to speak up if they are at all concerned."

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- 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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