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NEW COURT LIMIT MUST GO HAND IN HAND WITH SPECIALIST JUDGES

More judges who specialise in complex personal injury cases must be available if proposals to increase Northern Ireland's county court limit go ahead, lawyers warned this week.

Responding to a consultation by the Northern Ireland Court Service, the Association of Personal Injury Lawyers (APIL) warned that proposals to raise the barrier to allow more cases to be heard in the county courts must go hand in hand with a greater degree of specialism among the judiciary.

Oonagh McClure, speaking on behalf of APIL Northern Ireland, said if the Court Service insists on raising the limit, then measures must be in place to protect the interests of injured people.

"Raising the County Court limit will mean more personal injury cases are heard there, rather than in the High Court," she said. "These cases make up a large proportion of civil claims in Northern Ireland and, as it is a particularly complex area of law, we believe it is crucial that cases are heard by specialist judges."

APIL welcomed the proposal that clinical negligence cases, arguably the most complex type of case, would be excluded from the proposals and remain in the High Court.

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Note to editors:

- APIL responded to the Northern Ireland Court Service consultation paper: Increasing the Jurisdictional Limit of the County Courts of Northern Ireland
- For more information, contact Lisa Wardle, Press & PR Officer, APIL, t: 0115 9388715, or Jane Hartwell, Assistant press & PR Officer, t: 0115 9388702.
- 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.