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## JUSTICE MUST NOT BE DENIED BY COURT CLOSURES

A national campaign group has called on the Government to give a guarantee that injured people in England and Wales are not left with a restricted access to justice because of proposed cuts.

The not-for-profit Association of Personal Injury Lawyers (APIL) has asked the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) to provide a guarantee that all county court hearings will take place within 20 working days of a preliminary application being issued if proposals to close courts go ahead.

The MoJ is consulting on plans to close 54 county courts and 103 magistrates' courts, to save £36 million a year.

County courts are often used in personal injury trials. APIL asked the Government to give the guarantee in its response to a consultation by the MoJ.

APIL president Muiris Lyons said: "We all know public finances are under severe pressure, but the Government must ensure that people living in England and Wales continue to have proper access to justice.

"A guarantee should be given to the public that no one should have to wait more than 20 working days for their case to be heard at a county court after a preliminary application has been issued.

"This would give people - many of whom may feel anxious about the prospect of going to court in the first place - an assurance that their case is being dealt with efficiently.

"The Ministry of Justice must ensure that the courts which do remain open can cope with the inevitable increase in the number of trials which will come about because of these proposed closures.

"The Government must ensure that people are not left waiting for justice and that those living in rural communities are not cut off from accessing the courts completely. There seems to be little regard in these



plans to many people who could end up having to travel substantial distances to get access to justice.”

-Ends-

Note to editors:

- 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. APIL also provides an industry recognised kitemark to lawyers who reach a required standard of competence and specialist expertise in personal injury law.
- A full list of all county courts and magistrates’ courts set to close is available from the Ministry of Justice website or on request from the APIL press office.
- For more information or a full copy of APIL’s response to the Government consultation, please contact Chris Birkle, press and communications officer, t: 0115 938 8715, e: [chris.birkle@apil.org.uk](mailto:chris.birkle@apil.org.uk), or Jane Hartwell, assistant press and communications officer, t: 0115 938 8702, e: [jane.hartwell@apil.org.uk](mailto:jane.hartwell@apil.org.uk).
- Visit APIL’s website at [www.apil.org.uk](http://www.apil.org.uk).