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Proposals to help victims of crime who speak Welsh 'do not go far enough'

Victims of crime who speak Welsh have been let down by proposals for a Government-run compensation scheme, a not-for-profit campaign group says.

The Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority (CICA) has "not gone far enough" with plans to ensure that speakers of English and Welsh are treated equally.

"Victims of crime who speak Welsh as their first language must be treated fairly," said Brian Dawson, Association of Personal Injury Lawyers (APIL) co-ordinator for Wales.

"It is unfair for them to receive an inferior service to their English-speaking counterparts when seeking compensation for a criminal injury."

The CICA acknowledged in its consultation paper that it does not currently employ any Welsh speakers and is unable to provide a telephone service in Welsh. APIL has expressed concern that Welsh speakers who need to make an application for redress by telephone may be unable to give the best possible account of themselves.

Mr Dawson said: "The CICA has said that it will invite job applications from Welsh speakers, but it is not enough to merely hope that an applicant will be able to speak the language."

APIL has suggested that appeals hearings for Welsh speakers should take place in front of a panel which includes at least one person who understands the Welsh language and that the CICA representative should also be able to speak Welsh. Instead, the CICA has said it will provide a translator for appeals hearings.

"All Welsh speakers have the right to speak Welsh in court proceedings. Appeal hearings should be treated no differently," said Mr Dawson.

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Notes to editors:

- A Welsh speaking spokesman is available on request
- 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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