

CONSUMER PROTECTION AT FOREFRONT OF NEW CAMPAIGN

A new Consumer Watch campaign will be launched at the annual conference of the Association of Personal Injury Lawyers (APIL) in London today (May 20).

The campaign's aims are to prevent avoidable injuries by alerting members of the public to potential hazards, such as faulty products and poor workplace safety practices; campaign for improvements to health and safety laws; and – if the worst does happen – ensure people are provided with top quality legal services.

“The Consumer Watch campaign includes several important initiatives aimed primarily at ensuring members of the public are better informed about how to avoid being injured, and how to exercise their rights if they are,” said incoming APIL president Colin Ettinger.

“APIL members have vast, first-hand experience of the kind of negligence which causes injury, and we know that most injuries can be prevented from happening in the first place,” he said. “Some of the catastrophic injuries we see ruin people's lives forever, and it is our firm belief that the best public service personal injury lawyers can provide is to stop these from happening, rather than having to fight for compensation afterwards.”

One initiative of the campaign is SafetyWatch – a concerted media and public information initiative which will tell people where dangers lie and how to avoid them, as well as continuing with APIL's ongoing campaign to lobby for health and safety reforms. A new website is to be launched (consumersafetywatch.com) which will include information about potential hazards and a public forum to encourage the sharing of information.

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The Consumer Charter is another key aspect of the campaign, and will involve APIL members signing up to a set of promises to help reassure injured people that their cases will be dealt with sympathetically and professionally.

“We know many people find it difficult to approach lawyers, which is why they often turn for help to unregulated, unqualified people who approach them in the street,” said Colin. “We have all heard heart-rending stories about how things can go terribly wrong in such circumstances and we want people to understand that the best way to get their lives back on track quickly after an injury is to go direct to a solicitor and, if that solicitor is a signatory to the charter, this should provide extra confidence.”

APIL also has a College of Personal Injury Law (CPIL) which aims to ensure members are trained to the very highest standards, and injured people will be able to gain access to college members through the consumer safety watch website.

And, later in the year, the association will launch a series of ‘know your rights’ leaflets to help consumers navigate the complexities of personal injury law and their own legal rights.

“This whole project is underpinned by APIL’s code of conduct, which obliges our members to adhere to a set of professional standards,” said Colin. “Our aim with this new charter is to ensure people are absolutely confident and comfortable in dealing with solicitors when they have been injured through someone else’s negligence.”

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Note to editors: The Association of Personal Injury Lawyers (APIL) has more than 5,000 members worldwide including solicitors, barristers, academics and students, who are dedicated to providing a voice for injured people. Our main objective is to ensure access to justice for injured people and focus on prevention of avoidable injuries. APIL is not a referrals company.

For further information, please contact:

Lorraine Gwinnutt
Head of Legal & Public Affairs
APIL
11 Castle Quay
Nottingham
NG7 1FW
Tel: 0115 958 0585
Fax: 0115 924 3485
email: lorraine@apil.com

or

Lisa Wardle
Press & PR Officer
APIL
Tel: 0115 958 0585
Fax: 0115 924 3485
email: lisa@apil.com