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LEGAL AID REFORMS BLOCK JUSTICE FOR EAST ANGLIA HOME OWNERS

Thousands of home owners in East Anglia may be left unable to claim compensation should they be injured through NHS negligence.

If new proposals by the Legal Services Commission (LSC) go ahead, legal aid will not be available to the vast majority of residents. Many of them won't be able to pay for legal representation privately and won't get the compensation they need to get their lives back on track.

Colin Ettinger, president of the Association of Personal Injury Lawyers (APIL) explains why people in East Anglia will be affected by the Legal Services Commission's proposal.

"When an application for legal aid is being judged, the first £100,000 of the applicant's property equity is not taken into account. What the LSC is proposing, though, is that this allowance is abolished so that the full value of someone's property is assessed.

"This means that almost £175,000 – the average value of property in the East Midlands - will be considered when a legal aid application is made," he said. "The result is that many injured people will simply be 'priced-out' of the legal aid market and denied access to justice.

“It is already notoriously difficult to bring a claim against the NHS,” he went on. “This move will only exacerbate the problem and leave many people who have been seriously injured through no fault of their own unable to get their lives back on track.”

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Note to editors: Additional information on property prices can be found at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/spl/hi/in_depth/uk_house_prices/regions/html/region10.stm

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