

COST-CUTTING PUSHES INJURED PEOPLE DOWN PRIORITY LIST

Reforms to the personal injury legal system will only be classed as successful if the number of people claiming compensation increases, according to APIL president Colin Ettinger.

Addressing lawyers, government officials, MPs and insurers at the annual President's Dinner in London last night, Ettinger said one of the main problems with the legal system is that attention is on the claim and not the injured person.

"Too often we are over-concerned with arguing about what proves to be peripheral," he said. "Those involved in the claims process lose sight of the fact that there is an injured person who needs to be looked after...."

Ettinger questioned whether claimants' interests are treated as paramount and said he was concerned that the real motivation behind proposals for reform was to "cut costs."

"The DWP pilot scheme talks about protecting an injured person's interests, but will be judged on whether costs have been saved....the central suggestion from the Better Regulation Task Force is that the small claims court limit should be raised to £5000 – the motivation for this proposition is to cut the cost of dealing with these cases.... The Legal Services Commission made proposals to "reduce unnecessary litigation", which will result in virtually no litigation being state-funded – helping the legal aid budget but not injured people who deserve redress."

“Let’s see if all this goodwill and proposed reform actually delivers for injured people,” he said. “A good measure would be if reports say in two years time the numbers of people seeking redress are going up...and the next Citizens Advice report says two thirds of those injured – instead of one third – pursue a remedy.”

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