

LAWYERS' QUALITY KITEMARK LAUNCHED

A nationwide public information campaign which will direct injured people towards qualified, accredited personal injury lawyers has been welcomed by Department for Constitutional Affairs Minister, Baroness Ashton.

The campaign – launched yesterday (September 19) in London by the Association of Personal Injury Lawyers - will run alongside a new scheme which will assess lawyers according to their expertise, and provide a 'kitemark' of quality to all those who become accredited.

Speaking at the launch, author Nina Bawden, who was injured and lost her husband Austen Kark in the Potters Bar rail crash, said:

“Accidents happen to other people. Nothing prepares you- not life, not literature. Obtaining compensation for injury rather than death is more like an obstacle race.

“I had thought of how terrible it must be to be a victim but until what I think of as *my* railway crash, I had no idea what it would really be like.

“We live in a society that shamefully ignores its vulnerable citizens. It is important that the lawyers who come to our aid in time of deep trouble are decent and honourable people with proper credentials,” added Nina.

APIL's initiative is launched following a MORI survey, along with focus group research carried out by APIL, which found people would prefer to use an accredited, independent personal injury lawyer if they needed to make a claim. Almost all of those in the focus groups said their decisions would be influenced if a solicitor was regulated or accredited.

“It is crucial that people use qualified, accredited solicitors and, indeed, this is what people have told us they want,” said APIL president Allan Gore QC. “The MORI research found that three times more people would prefer an accredited, independent personal injury lawyer (41 per cent) to deal with their claim, rather than a claims management company (13 per cent). We also know from the research that people do not know where to go to find out about regulations relating to personal injury claims – most said they would ask a friend or use telephone directories.

“There is a real lack of information and guidance for consumers,” continued Allan. “The Government recently produced a study which said consumers may be disadvantaged by a lack of information about quality within the legal market place. We hope our campaign – coupled with the new accreditation scheme – will provide guidance on whether someone has a right to claim, information and peace of mind to anyone injured through negligence.”

APIL’s campaign will be supported by leaflets, posters, and a new website, all of which will explain the importance of using an accredited lawyer, how the APIL accreditation scheme works, and where APIL accredited lawyers can be contacted.

Note to editors:

Full details of the MORI survey and focus group research are available on request.

MORI interviewed a nationally representative quota sample of 1,005 adults aged 16+ in Great Britain. Interviews were carried out between 2 and 4 September over the telephone. No incentives were offered to respondents.

APIL was established in 1990 by a group of lawyers working on behalf of injured people, and now has more than 5,000 members. It is an independent, not for profit organisation providing accreditation to lawyers specialising in the area of personal injury law. This accreditation shows an APIL lawyer has achieved a specific standard. APIL members adhere to a code of conduct and agree to abide by a Consumer Charter.

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