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GOVERNMENT PRAISED FOR ASBESTOS CLAIMS ACTION BUT TRACING EMPLOYERS IS STILL A MAJOR PROBLEM

Swift action by the Government to reverse last month's controversial House of Lords ruling, which jeopardised compensation payouts for mesothelioma victims, has been praised by lawyers.

Richard Langton, president of the Association of Personal Injury Lawyers (APIL) said the speed with which the Government has addressed the issue could mean thousands of mesothelioma victims and their families have a better chance of obtaining compensation.

"The Law Lords dealt a devastating blow when they ruled that each of the victim's past employers should only be responsible for paying a portion of the compensation awarded," he said.

"This flew in the face of a previous case in which insurers conceded that where several employers could be held responsible for exposing an employee to asbestos, the claimant had the right to pursue full compensation from whichever employer was able to pay.

"We are obviously relieved the Government has pledged to take action on this matter," said Langton. "There are other concerns related to asbestos claims which are currently under discussion, and we are looking forward to working closely with the Government and various stakeholders to find ways of helping victims receive fair and speedy compensation.

"One of APIL's particular concerns is how notoriously difficult it is for victims to actually trace their former employers, as many of them go out of business years before any disease becomes apparent."

APIL has consistently called for insurers to pool information about searches and wants to see a central database in place to make the whole process more efficient. Langton said the association was also deeply concerned that those

victims unable to track down former employers often had no other option than to give up their right to compensation.

“We need to establish an employers’ insurers bureau which would act as an insurer of last resort to help those people unable to make a claim through the usual channels.”

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