

**MINUTES OF MEETING OF SOUTH AREA GROUP OF APIL – 24 SEPTEMBER 2007 AT
HILTON HOTEL, CHILWORTH NEAR SOUTHAMPTON**

We had a meeting for the above with 13 attendees.

Nearly all of the meeting was taken up by a very interesting talk by Elizabeth Waterman and Sue Vernon of Jacqueline Webb & Co with the prime focus being on addressing motorbility needs for seriously injured Claimants. Unfortunately there was no EC update available for us to discuss.

Most PI Practitioners are probably very familiar with Jacqueline Webb & Co who produce numerous reports with regard to rehabilitation, costs of care and aids and equipment in serious personal injury claims.

However, something that is perhaps overlooked by some of us are the needs of Claimants with regard to transport and in particular adaptation of vehicles to allow for their disabilities.

Sue Vernon herself is a qualified driving instructor as well as being an experienced Occupational Therapist.

Pre-Assessment

The Occupational Therapist should consider various matters before a formal assessment with the Claimant.

- Licensing issues. This may seem obvious! Need to inform DVLA of any medical condition suffered for 3 months or more which is likely to affect driving.
- Issues relating to passengers
- Existing vehicle
- Continence

Driving Assessment

Assessment of ability to multitask is essential.

This is vital in brain injury cases.

Other issues include the history of the Claimant, what type of vehicles they are used to driving.

Medical issues to be considered will include balance and also perhaps more importantly visual tests in terms of vertical and horizontal vision.

The global assessment will essentially be a 5 point test.

1. Joint movement range
2. Strength
3. Co-ordination

4. Sensation

5. Position

The main limitation will almost certainly be poor co-ordination or sensory alterations.

Essentially a Claimant will need 2 working limbs to be able to continue to drive.

The Occupational Therapist will then consider whether it is appropriate to change the vehicle and provide a new one altogether or carry adaptations.

Adaptations can be all manner of things such as shoulder steering devices, mouth sticks etc.

Automatic cars with hand controls can also be an option. It is important to take extra care in these circumstances especially where for example a left side accelerator pedal is inserted. Consideration also needs to be given as to whether driving is shared with another person so interchange ability needs to be considered in these circumstances.

Sue then ran us through details of the visual cognitive screening reaction times tests.

Matters then need to be considered with regard to access to and egress from the vehicle as well as comfort and suitability.

Wheelchair access is an obvious consideration.

Also crash worthiness is an important issue. Clearly safety for the future must be considered.

A home visit is absolutely essential. Sue gave a very interesting example of a Claimant whose driveway was clearly unsuitable for a changed vehicle.

Sue then actually showed us all around a specially adapted vehicle that she brought along to the meeting and this really was a fascinating demonstration of what modern technology can offer in these circumstances to somebody.

There was certainly a lot of interest shown after this!

Lastly Elizabeth did give a talk concerning her organisation's services in relation to rehabilitation which we as Claimant Lawyers and APIL members should always be considering in every case. There was heavy emphasis upon the need for early intervention.