

"Cutting 'no win, no fee' claims could cost us all more," warns Manchester lawyer

"Reforms to 'no win, no fee' claims in England and Wales could cost the economy more in job losses and benefit payments." This is the warning from personal injury lawyer, Alison Connolly at Manchester-based, Glaisyers Solicitors LLP.

"The no win, no fee system has helped millions of genuine people gain access to justice who would otherwise been scared away due to the perceived cost of seeking legal advice," argues Alison Connolly.

"Without the current legislation, introduced in 2000. many genuine claimants would not have recovered valuable compensation for the injuries and financial hardship they have had to endure.

"Personal injury claims are, in all but the rarest of cases, paid for by insurance companies and not by businesses or individuals. So, unless insurance companies pass savings on, I struggle to see how these reforms are going to help the average business and the man on the street

"My real concern is that Mr Clarke's measures will mean that victims of serious accidents with life-changing injuries will be deterred from making a claim, or will be unable to obtain legal representation.

"This doesn't help the economy, it hinders it. Compensation claims can ease the burden on the public purse as the Government recover benefits paid to injured people from their compensation. The NHS can also recover the cost of NHS treatment from the insurance company making seriously injured people less reliant on the State.

"Add to that the thousands of redundancies in the civil justice system, at insurance companies and legal practices that may follow a reduction in claims, stalling

BBC's The One Show team up with Ralli to

the recovery still further."

The Justice Secretary said that the Government believed that the reforms would dissuade people from bringing 'spurious cases' before the court.

"I don't believe the new system will change anything, in fact I think it will make matters worse! The proposals for one-way costs shifting mean that if an injury claim fails, the claimant will not have to pay any of the other side's fees, without the need for an insurance policy. This change is surely an incentive for more 'spurious' claims to be pursued and for insurance companies to settle such claims early, rather than face their own solicitor's fees.

"If a case is extremely weak then, at present, insurers are going to recover their legal



fees from the claimant's insurance and so it is far less likely to be settled.

"I hope that the Government will force insurers to pass on savings from the changes so that people at the lower end of the income scale and small businesses benefit."

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investigate illegal download harassment case Consumer champion Do-

minic Littlewood from BBC's The One Show has teamed up with national law firm Ralli to investigate the real story behind the activity of ACS Law and illegal downloading.

Michael Forrester, the solicitor leading the team preparing the group action for consumers alleging harassment against ACS Law, explained details of the complex issues and consumers' rights following the recent court case criticising the activities of ACS Law and the sole principle Andrew Crossley.

Dominic Littlewood also interviewed two of Ralli's clients, Mr and Mrs Johnston-Knight, who are alleging harassment against ACS Law. The married couple explained how they received letters accusing them of



downloading pornography which also threatened to take them to court if they did not pay £500.

Michael Forrester has since

been asked by a government department to advise an all party parliamentary group on IP/IT law issues. This follows on from his conduct of a number of precedent cases on key issues related to infringement of intellectual property rights on the internet.

The programme aired on Thursday 10 March on BBC1 and can be watched again using the iPlayer service http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b00zf37f/The_One_Show_10_03_2011/

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