

Injured people object to proposed small claims limit increase

Victims of road accidents across the country are calling on the government to protect the right to legal representation.

Thousands of victims of accidents on the road may not be entitled to free legal representation under government proposals which will see the small claims limit in road accident claims rise by 500%, from £1,000 to £5,000.

Those who have seen first-hand how devastating a road accident can be are calling for the government to ensure everyone has the right to free independent expert advice if it happens to them.

CASE STUDY: Injured London cyclist and father of three speaks out for others

A London cyclist who received £1,750 in compensation through campaigning law firm Thompsons Solicitors after he was injured in a road traffic accident has spoken about his injuries and the fight he needed legal help to win.

In July 2014, father of three and Senior Research Fellow Simon Levine was cycling home from work on Brixton Road near Oval when he was knocked off his bike by a car that failed to stop, leaving Simon to be taken care of by passers-by. An ambulance was called and he was taken to A&E, where he was diagnosed as having soft tissue injuries to his shoulder, arm, hip, knee and elbow, together with grazing.

The driver of the car was later found guilty of dangerous driving and failing to stop at the scene.

Simon was unable to walk comfortably for two weeks and couldn't get into work over that period. He was also unable to enjoy a walking holiday with his children in the Surrey countryside.

Simon was able to receive free legal support from road traffic accident specialists [Thompsons Solicitors](#) to investigate his claim and secure damages. He says he would never have been able to fight the case alone against the driver's insurer.

Simon said: "Without legal representation from Thompsons Solicitors, I would almost certainly have given up on making a claim because I didn't know where to start. Thompsons Solicitors had the expertise to understand the system and win my case.

“The driver’s insurer actually refused to make any settlement, so on my own I’d have either stopped pursuing the claim or had a much weaker case and far less compensation, because the balance of power would have been so uneven: the insurance company with experienced lawyers vs. me on my own.

“The government is planning to prevent cyclists, injured through no fault of their own, from accessing a free or affordable independent lawyer. Why should accident victims - not those who caused the injury -have to pay out to get essential legal help?”

Tom Jones, head of policy at Thompsons Solicitors, said: “Cyclists remain one of the most vulnerable road users in the country, and without free or affordable legal representation, they will be on their own if they are injured.

“Increasing the small claims limit will mean hundreds of thousands of people injured on the road through no fault of their own will be left without someone to fight their corner, which is grossly unfair. Proposals to increase the small claims limit serve only the insurance lobby who have their eye on one thing – fewer pay outs for injury victims and more profit for themselves.”

ENDS