

Know Your Rights



WITH LEGAL EXPERT JONATHAN WHITE

Each year thousands of people suffer accidents that should and could have been avoided.

Too often, these victims suffer serious consequences from their injuries such as health complications and financial problems from being out of work. They do so without receiving any support which could help them get back on their feet.

Why? Because too many people do not understand their legal rights and are intimidated by a system designed to help them. Jonathan White is an expert specialising in personal injury. Each month, he'll answer readers' queries about their legal rights.

Hit by speeding car

Q I was knocked down by a speeding car. I received multiple injuries to my leg, severely damaging my knee which has impacted my quality of life.

I've had five operations and will need two more.

My family suggest I seek some compensation but I'm confused as to how much it will cost me to pay a solicitor and how lengthy the process will be.

Ms T Leslie

A The no win, no fee system is designed to help people injured in accidents to recover the compensation they are entitled to, without having to worry about paying legal fees. So if your case is unsuccessful, you won't pay anything.

If your claim is successful, you will be compensated to cover your loss of earnings, medical bills and other expenses including legal costs.

The length of the process depends on the case.

Your solicitor should be able to successfully negotiate settlement of your claim once they have established the full extent of your injury and financial loss and without the need to go to court.

Job caused back pain

Q My job involved a lot of stooping, bending and twisting to inspect vehicles but I hadn't received the proper training. Back pain developed into sciatica and a slipped disc.

The pain meant that I was barely able to move and had to take time off work. I had to go back as I needed the money but I couldn't return to my old job and ended up leaving the company.

Do I have a right to pursue some compensation? My former employer is trying to talk me out of making any fuss. What rights do I have?

Mrs J. Grace

A Your former employer has a legal duty to ensure the workplace is well maintained and that employees are provided with the necessary equipment and training to fulfil their jobs.

The law clearly recognises that people who have sustained an injury as a direct result of someone else's negligence are entitled to compensation.

Employers know that they cannot interfere with your legal rights and to do so would be a breach of employment legislation.

Remember, an employer is legally required to be insured against accidents in the workplace.

■ If you have suffered a personal injury and are confused about your rights, email Jonathan at knowmyrights@nahl.co.uk or visit www.national-accident-helpline.co.uk/knowyourrights for more information.

