



SUPPORT FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME

March 2006

Background

The Home Office published a consultation on 7 December 2005 'Rebuilding Lives – supporting victims of crime'. This document has two main objectives:

- 1) a major simplification of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme (CICS) increasing the amount of support provided to victims of the most serious crimes
- 2) the creation of new Victim Care Units, (VCUs) which would deliver support services to victims of less serious crime that are immediate, local and tailored to the victim's needs rather than a relatively small financial payment.

The Home Office is revisiting this area only two years since the last consultation. However, they insist that the previous proposals was tinkering at edges whereas now the plan is grander and aimed at a total reordering of how victims should be compensated

This briefing note provides an overview of the key proposals and identifies the potential impact on the licensed retail trade

Overview

The government believe there is a strong case for simplifying the current compensation scheme so that it is quicker and more efficient, and focused on the more serious cases. They wish to achieve this by developing standardised compensation payments for particular injuries, rather than operating the current system of standard payments plus loss of care earnings and care costs.

The Government insist that CICS was never intended to be a substitute for employers' insurance, or to pay for compensation for anything other than violent crime. The scheme currently compensates workers who have been the victim of violent crime whilst at work. The Home Office feel that this could be seen to act as a disincentive for employers to make the workplace safe and do everything reasonably possible to protect their employees.

The main implication for the industry relates to the proposals to establish new Victim Support Units, and specifically to injuries sustained in the course of employment.

Injuries Sustained at Work

The consultation draws attention to the fact that CICS has, over time, made payments to workers injured as a result of violent crime at work and the suggestion that such injuries should properly be compensated through the employers' insurance.

The proposals would mean that there would be a further lever on employers to ensure that they are minimising risk. This needs to be resisted due to the existing raft of legislation in place to deal with health and safety. The industry needs to point out that this should remain as the principal means of ensuring companies have the procedures in place to identify, plan for and minimise risks to their employees.



Regulatory Impact Assessment

The proposals to shift responsibility to employers' insurance schemes to compensate victims of crime will further add to cost of employers' liability and public liability insurance.

Previous consultations have revealed that small businesses would suffer and have suggested that the obligation would only apply to companies employing 250 or more staff. If the Government decides to press ahead with the proposal to transfer responsibility for compensation of all injuries at work to employers, then the industry needs to strongly urge them to introduce such a threshold

ALMR Action

The industry needs to issue a firm and consistent message that overburdening with additional social responsibility charges will have a detrimental effect on many smaller outlets.

It must be made crystal clear to government that there are '*cases of injury at work, (and) violent crimes that cannot reasonably be guarded against by employers and for which society as a whole should continue to provide compensation*', such as door supervisors or bar staff attacked by customers.