

Spinal Cord Injuries: An introduction to claiming compensation

“Today, I’m getting on with moving forward in my life in a variety of ways and I’m grateful for how Thompsons have helped with it all.”

Mark



THE MOST EXPERIENCED
PERSONAL INJURY FIRM IN THE UK



“Thompsons were there for me when I needed them” Mr Arde

Mr Arde, a South African citizen, suffered severe spinal and head injuries when he was crushed by a fork lift truck. Thompsons helped him to get leave to remain in the UK and obtain substantial interim payments.

These enabled him to buy and adapt a house and to employ carers.

A life sentence?

It is estimated that everyday in the UK, three people sustain a spinal cord injury which leaves them permanently disabled. (Source: Spinal Injuries Association)

With no current cure for the condition, the effects of a traumatic spinal cord injury are usually lifelong.

Such injuries can change lives in an instant, both the life of the victim and the lives of their family and friends.

First, there is the injury itself and its effects to begin to cope with.

And at the same time, there is also the beginning of coming to terms with all the other emotional, caring and monetary demands.

The prospect is daunting and it's no surprise that many victims and their families hardly know which way to turn.

Yet successfully claiming for compensation can bring very real help with many of these problems and this booklet is a brief guide to what is involved.

Experience counts!

Thompsons has been established for over 90 years. We use that experience to ensure that clients get the right amount of compensation in every claim, resulting in several record settlements over the years.

What's more, our clients keep 100% of any settlement - our fees are paid for by the other side. It costs absolutely nothing to talk to us about your own case and without obligation.

Simply phone 08000 224 224.

“My mam describes Thompsons as being ‘Absolutely great – they can’t do enough to help you!’ And I know she’s recommended Thompsons to other people.” Mark

“In 2001, when I was 17, I was a passenger in a terrible car accident.

The car I was in skidded and went over a 70 foot drop and into a beck.

I had broken my neck and was trapped, and the car was letting water in. I’m lucky to be alive.

The day I was told I would be paralysed from the chest downwards and wouldn’t walk again was the day I determined not to break.

I drive using only my hands and passed my driving test two years ago. And I’ve developed other interests.

I was a very keen footballer and rugby player and have now started playing wheelchair rugby. I play for Newcastle Bulls.

During my time in hospital, which included an eight hour session in surgery, my family and I discussed the degree of support and treatment I need, the very

considerable costs involved and claiming compensation.

Thompsons Solicitors acted for us in our claim.

They were really thorough in evaluating my needs.

They talked to my carers at length about my current and future needs and their costs.

Thompsons’ Andrew McDonald became a very good friend.

He mostly dealt with my mam. But when he needed to see me he would call round to our home which was much easier than me getting to him.

Thompsons were also really good at keeping us in the picture.

They made sure we knew what was going to happen and when it would happen.

Today, I’m getting on with moving forward in my life in a variety of ways and I’m grateful for how Thompsons have helped with it all.”





The effects of a spinal cord injury are usually lifelong.

Your Spinal Cord injury

Your spinal cord is the major bundle of nerves that carry nerve impulses to and from the brain to the rest of the body.

It is possible to sustain a break or fracture to one or more of the bones or vertebrae in your back without sustaining a spinal cord injury.

But when the spinal cord is injured, the ability of the brain to communicate with the body below the injury, may be reduced or lost altogether.

When that happens, the part of the body affected will not function normally.

Five important points for you to consider

1. Get the best evidence possible

To make a successful claim for compensation for you, we need to prove that someone else was to blame for your accident and injuries.

And the stronger the evidence, the stronger the claim.

For example, in a road traffic accident, the kind of evidence you may already have or that we can help collect for you, might be that another driver was driving without proper care and attention or was speeding.

Or with accidents at work, your employer at the time was responsible for providing a safe place of work and safe plant and equipment.

Was this the case when you were injured? It may also be helpful if you have any photographs relevant to the accident or your injuries.

Even if the evidence collected shows you were partly to blame for your accident you may still have a valid claim if we can prove someone else was also at fault.

2. How much compensation might be awarded?

Compensation is awarded for pain, suffering and the inability to do things you could do before your accident. It is also awarded for the accident's effect on your physical mobility and mental health.

Thompsons has more experience at working to maximise such claims than any other law firm in Britain.

We will obtain expert medical reports on your injuries if necessary.

And we will claim for all your losses and expenses. Including loss of earnings now and in the future, and the costs of your care and assistance now and in the future – right down to the costs of having others do jobs for you that you used to do yourself such as DIY, gardening and car maintenance.

If your home needs to be adapted to your condition, we will claim for that. And we will claim all travelling expenses incurred because of the accident, including those of close relatives visiting you in hospital.

3. Rehabilitation and Care

After you are discharged from your spinal unit you will need a plan for your continuous care. Seeking prompt legal advice is vital as, where possible, we will secure an interim payment as part of your claim.

We will then work with specialist spinal injury experts and the NHS to ensure that your ongoing care and treatment is as continuous and straightforward as possible.

After sustaining a spinal cord injury you may need to see several specialists both during your time in hospital and after. Such specialists can include: neurologists, spinal surgeons, urologists, gastroenterologists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists and social workers.

Additionally, long term or lifelong support may be needed in cases of severe spinal cord injury. Local authorities may provide some of this. An experienced lawyer can help you gain prompt access to these, or similar services, as part of your claim.

Funding for support may also be claimed for and the amount will be assessed carefully to reflect your long-term needs.

For very serious injuries we also work with three further types of specialists.

- Case managers – to plan and coordinate any rehabilitation, care and support the patient may need.
- Support workers – to support the patient in their home and in the community.
- Job coaches – to help the patient look at ways of returning to their current employment, or to provide training to allow them to work in new areas.

4. Timing can be vital

You should seek legal advice as soon as possible – action needs to be started within three years of the date of the accident.

There are exceptions, for example in relation to claims made by children. But it is always best to see a solicitor as soon as possible after the accident.

As far as Thompsons is concerned the more time you have in hand, the more thoroughly we can prepare your claim.

In appropriate cases, we can apply for an ‘interim payment’ of compensation. This can help with essential things like the cost of care or urgent housing adaptations.



At Thompsons, we work with specialist spinal injury experts and the NHS.

If you are a member of a trade union, contact your local representative as your claim will probably be supported by their own union legal scheme.

5. What about state benefit claims?

You may be entitled to disablement benefit and/or other state benefits. Thompsons can advise you on this as, of course, can your local Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) office.

Any such claims are made separately to your claim for compensation. The phone number of the DWP benefit enquiry freephone is opposite, along with other helpful numbers.



Who will represent you?

An experienced solicitor will work with medical professionals who will provide detailed evidence about your injuries – as well as recommendations for the care needed for your future.

This booklet has shown you just two of Thompsons' spinal injury clients and they have told their stories in their own words.

We have, of course, many more such clients.

We have specialist serious injuries teams, with experience in winning multi-million pound settlements.

We will visit you at your hospital or in your home at a time convenient to you to discuss your claim. You will be under no obligation.

And as already mentioned, our clients always keep 100% of their settlements. It's all part of what has made Thompsons Solicitors the most experienced personal injury law firm in the UK.

Simply call the number opposite to arrange a visit.

Useful contacts

Department for Work and Pensions benefit enquiry line
Freephone 0800 88 22 00 Textphone 0800 24 33 55

Care Quality Commission
03000 61 61 61 www.cqc.org.uk

NHS Direct
0845 4647 www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

Spinal Injuries Association
Freephone enquiry line 0800 980 0501
sia@spinal.co.uk www.spinal.co.uk

Aspire
Telephone: 020 8954 5759 Textphone: 020 8420 6501
info@aspire.org.uk www.aspire.org.uk

ICAS (Independent Complaints Advocacy Service)
www.carersfederation.co.uk

Independent Living Funds
0845 601 8815
funds@ifl.org.uk www.dwp.gov.uk/ifl

Brain and Spine Foundation
0808 808 1000
helpline@brainandspine.org.uk www.brainandspine.org.uk

Disabled Living Foundation
0845 130 9177
info@dlf.org.uk www.dlf.org.uk

The Back Up Trust
Tel: 020 8875 1805
www.backuptrust.org.uk

**For more information about making a claim,
simply call Thompsons on 08000 224 224
(free from landlines)**

**0330 123 1230 (free from mobiles
where covered by inclusive minutes)**

Thompsons Solicitors Offices

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Nottingham 0115 989 7200
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Derby 01332 224680
Wolverhampton 01902 771551

North West

Liverpool 0151 224 1600
Manchester 0161 819 3500

Wales & South West

Cardiff 029 2044 5300
Bristol 0117 304 2400
Plymouth 01752 675 810
Swansea 01792 484 920

South East

London 020 7290 0000
Southampton 02380 212 040
Chelmsford 01245 228800
Dagenham 020 8596 7700
Wimbledon 020 8947 4163
Oxford 01865 332 150

Further Information

Call us, without obligation, for free compensation claim advice
on 08000 224 224.

Or if you are in a union, ask your representative for advice.

You can also find out more information on our website at
www.thompsons.law.co.uk



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The information contained in this brochure is not a substitute for legal advice, and only applies in England and Wales. You should talk to a lawyer or adviser before making a decision about what to do.

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